

Saratoga Beach

Local Area Plan

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Statutory Alignment Statement

This Local Area Plan is adopted as part of the Rural Comox Valley Official Community Plan under Part 14, Division 4 of the Local Government Act. It provides place-specific objectives, policies, and supporting maps for the plan area. The Plan should be read together with the Rural Comox Valley Official Community Plan, the Regional Growth Strategy, the Zoning Bylaw, applicable development permit area requirements, and other applicable enactments.

This Local Area Plan has been prepared with consideration of the most recent Housing Needs Report information available to the CVRD, including housing needs for Electoral Area C, and reflects the local servicing, environmental, hazard, access, and infrastructure conditions that affect the location, amount, type, and density of residential development that may be appropriate in the Saratoga Beach plan area.

Land Acknowledgment

The Saratoga Beach Local Area Plan area is within the unceded traditional territory of the K'ómoks First Nation.

The CVRD acknowledges the Nation's enduring relationship with these lands and waters, including the Oyster River, the shoreline, fish habitat, cultural heritage, and the natural systems that shape the Plan area.

The CVRD is committed to considering Indigenous interests and knowledge with care and respect as the Plan is developed and used to guide future local planning decisions.



List Of Acronyms

ALR	Agricultural Land Reserve
AOI	Area of Interest
ATNP	Active Transportation Network Plan
BCOB	Black Creek / Oyster Bay
CHP	Cultural Heritage Policy
CHIP	Cultural Heritage Investigation Permit
CVRD	Comox Valley Regional District
DPA	Development Permit Area
LAP	Local Area Plan
LGA	Local Government Act
LWMP	Liquid Waste Management Plan
MOTT	Ministry of Transportation and Transit
OC	Official Community Plan
QEP	Qualified Environmental Professional
RGS	Regional Growth Strategy
SRD	Strathcona Regional District

Zone Acronyms (Refer to the Zoning Bylaw for Specific Regulations)

CR-1	Country Residential One Zone
R-1	Residential One Zone
TC-1	Tourist Commercial One Zone

High Priority Actions

These policies have been identified as priority actions through the LAP engagement process with the community.

SECTION 1

About This Place

1.1 Area Overview

The Saratoga Beach plan area is a rural coastal community in the northern CVRD, within Electoral Area C. It is bounded by the Oyster River to the north, the Saratoga and Miracle Beach shoreline to the east. Highway 19A as the main transportation corridor.

The area includes permanent residences, seasonal homes, visitor accommodation, recreation uses, and limited local commercial activity. Residential areas extend along the shoreline and inland on both sides of Highway 19A, while visitor accommodation and tourism-oriented uses are concentrated near the waterfront.

Natural systems define the area. Wetlands, streams, coastal ecosystems, and the Oyster River watershed support ecological function, drainage, cultural values, and landscape character. These systems also influence where development may be appropriate and under what conditions.

Servicing varies across the plan area. The majority of properties are connected to a community water system, with a few private wells. All properties rely on private sewage systems. Rainwater is managed through natural drainage patterns, roadside drainage, and site-level systems.

Together, the area's environmental, servicing, transportation, settlement conditions and the community's input and vision for the future shape the planning context for this LAP.

1.2 Area History

1.2.1 Indigenous history

The Saratoga Beach plan area is within the unceded traditional territory of the K'ómoks First Nation and within areas of shared and overlapping traditional use with the Wei Wai Kum Nation, We Wai Kai Nation, Mamalilikulla First Nation, Homalco First Nation, Da'naxda'xw/Awaetlala First Nation, Tlowitsis First Nation, and others.

Indigenous peoples have lived, travelled, harvested, and stewarded this coastal and river environment for thousands of years. The Oyster River, nearby estuaries, shoreline, and marine waters supported fishing, shellfish harvesting, and seasonal gathering, and continue to hold cultural, ecological, and archaeological significance.

The planning area also falls within a Cultural Heritage Investigation Permit (CHIP) area, reflecting the known and potential presence of archaeological sites associated with long-standing Indigenous use of the landscape.



1.2.2 K'ómoks First Nation

The ancestors of the modern-day K'ómoks First Nation have stewarded and used the area now known as Saratoga Beach for thousands of years. K'ómoks First Nation people are part of two predominant cultures, Northern Coast Salish and Kwakwaka'wakw, and place names in the area reflect both Kwakwaka'wakw and Ayajuthem (Island Comox language)¹. The English name Miracle Beach reflects Kwakwaka'wakw stories associated with the area. One story describes a woman being turned to stone, creating Mitlenatch Island², while another describes a time of conflict when a stranger was welcomed and later revealed to be a messenger of the Great Spirit.³

The area continues to support important harvesting and stewardship activities and has long been used by the first peoples of the area. Marine traps and weirs were used extensively and are frequently referenced in traditional stories as critical tools for managing a productive coastal landscape.⁴

K'ómoks history and archaeological investigations at Saratoga Beach have identified a fishing system extending over one kilometre, consisting of a complex series of traps demonstrating significant resource investment.⁵ Radiocarbon dating of wood stakes suggest continuous use of this feature over 1,000 years.⁴

The design of the traps allowed fish to move with the tides and supported selective harvesting.⁴ This reflects long-standing principles of stewardship, sustainability, and respect for ecological cycles that continue to inform K'ómoks First Nation responsibilities to lands and waters.⁴

K'ómoks First Nation protects cultural heritage through the Cultural Heritage Policy (CHP), grounded in ancestral teachings (?əms ta?aw) and responsibilities to care for lands and waters for past, present, and future

generations.⁶ The CHP is a fundamental part of the consultation process and allows K'ómoks First Nation to make informed decisions about irreversible impacts to cultural heritage.

The policy and associated archaeological investigation permit (CHIP) process support the identification, management, and protection of cultural heritage.⁶ The CHIP is an application process that reviews planned ground-disturbing activities against the recorded archaeological record and designated areas of high archaeological potential found up to 200m from major waterways, and within 200m of previously recorded archaeological sites within K'ómoks First Nation's Southern Core Territory.

1.2.3 Post-Contact history

Post-contact settlement in the Saratoga Beach plan area began in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Early settlement followed a dispersed rural pattern, with large parcels, limited services, shoreline access, and reliance on what is now Highway 19A as the main access route.



1 K'ómoks First Nation Origin Stories. <https://komoks.ca/cultures/>.

2 Miracle Beach Park Master Plan (1989). https://nrs.objectstore.gov.bc.ca/kuwyyf/miracle_beach_pk_mp_19890713_e0c2bce814.pdf.

3 BC Geographical Name. Miracle Beach Park. <https://apps.gov.bc.ca/pub/bcgnws/names/32235.html>

4 Cohen, J. and H. Pratt (2019).. *Another kettle of fish: unexpected wood fishing features at Saratoga Beach from Waterlogged : examples and procedures for Northwest Coast archaeologists* / edited by Kathryn Bernick. Pullman, Washington : Washington State University Press

5 Saratoga Beach LAP Archaeological Information: DISG-5 Information from iMap (2025). [Archaeological Information Request Report]. Submitted to the Archaeology Branch, Ministry of Forests, Victoria, BC.

6 KFN Cultural Heritage Policy (2020). KFN-Cultural-Heritage-Policy-2020.pdf

Local roads built in the 1950s and 1960s, including Miracle Beach Drive and Clarkson Avenue, established the structure of the first residential neighbourhoods and the basic road pattern that remains today.

COURTENAY, BRITISH COLUMBIA

RECORD CROWD ATTEND SPORTS DOMINION DAY

Saratoga Beach Proves Popular
as Venue for Annual
Celebrations.

2,000 PRESENT.

More than 2,000 people from all parts of the Comox district assembled at Saratoga Beach, Oyster River Monday, for the Dominion Day celebrations and Loggers' Sports. The weather, which in the morning was overcast, changed about noon and brilliant sunshine flooded the beach during the sports.

Races and baseball game were held on the beach itself until the encroaching tide drove everyone to the higher reaches. Booths and other amusements were staged just behind the beach, and here too the Loggers' events were contested.

It is estimated more than 700 cars brought the huge crowd that attended. Ample parking space was available, and the police are to be congratulated upon the way in which they handled the unwonted traffic in these parts. The whole day proceeded without a hitch, and all voted the occasion the most enjoyable and most successful Dominion Day for years.

Celebrations concluded with the usual dance in the Native Sons' hall, Courtenay, in the evening. Details of events for kiddies and adults follow. Loggers' sports are given in a separate column.

*Comox District Free Press, 1935
(source: Courtenay and District
Museum)*

While the surrounding areas of Black Creek and Oyster River were the sites of several logging camps and related industries starting in the early 1900s, tourism and recreation developed alongside early settlement at Saratoga Beach.

The area hosted important community celebrations and recreation events and the beach drew locals and visitors alike throughout the early and mid-20th century. Campgrounds, resorts, and recreation use located near the shoreline and highway, establishing an economic role that continues to influence land use today.



*Postcard, Saratoga Beach
Vacation Playground*

(source: Stelling Agencies, Ltd.)



Postcard, Saratoga Beach 1965

(source: The Coast Publishing Co., Ltd.)

More intensive residential development occurred in the 1970s and 1980s with the introduction and expansion of community water systems. The Watutco water system supported subdivision in areas such as Henderson Avenue and McLarey Avenue, while the Black Creek-Oyster Bay system supported neighbourhoods including Clarkson Avenue, Driftwood Road, Catherwood Road, and Oakes Road.

During the same period, zoning, subdivision, and servicing bylaws formalized development expectations. Since the 1990s, change has occurred mainly through incremental infill within the existing road and servicing network, with further expansion limited by water supply, on-site sewage constraints, environmental conditions, and infrastructure capacity.



SECTION 2

About This Community

2.1 Population and Demographic Profile

The Saratoga Beach plan area includes permanent residents, seasonal occupants, and visitor accommodation. Seasonal population fluctuations affect housing demand, traffic, parking, infrastructure use, and service pressures throughout the year.

The population of the plan area was 1,511 in the 2021 Census, representing an 8.9 per cent increase since 2016. Population change is influenced by new housing, occupancy patterns, second homes, seasonal use, and visitor accommodation.

The plan area has an older population profile, with a median age of 56. Most residents, 56.6 per cent, are between 15 and 64 years old. This demographic pattern affects housing, mobility, and service needs, including demand for housing that supports aging in place and smaller households.

Households in the plan area are generally small. The average household size is 2.3 persons, and 430 of 620 private households consist of one or two people. These trends support consideration of smaller and more flexible housing options where local servicing, environmental, and hazard conditions allow.

2.2 Settlement Pattern

The Saratoga Beach plan area developed partly as a coastal recreation destination. Many properties began as seasonal cottages or vacation homes, with some later transitioning to permanent residences.

The settlement pattern remains low density, with residential, visitor accommodation,

recreation, and limited commercial uses arranged around Highway 19A, local roads, and waterfront access.

2.2.1 Land uses

Residential use is the dominant land use. Visitor accommodation and tourism-oriented uses are concentrated near the shoreline and beach access points, and recreation areas.

A small number of local businesses and facilities provide basic services, while most shopping, healthcare, and daily needs are accessed in nearby service centres, including the Oyster River area, Courtenay and Campbell River.

Commercial recreation uses include a golf course, outdoor racetrack, and marina. Light industrial uses are mainly located near the southern gateway of the plan area.

PROPOSED MAJOR DEVELOPMENT

The approximately 37-hectare property at the end of McLarey Avenue has been under consideration for development since the mid-1990s. Internal roads and underground services were partially constructed during earlier planning phases.

In 2011, the CVRD Board approved Comprehensive Development zoning and a Master Development Agreement permitting up to 143 bare-land strata lots, on the easterly portion of the property, subject to community water and sanitary sewer servicing.

Natural features, including wetlands, streams, coastal areas, and forested areas, are distributed throughout the area and continue to shape land use, development potential, and site design.



2.2.2 Community services and amenities

Public amenities include beach access points, local parks, and recreation areas (Map 14.6). Miracle Beach Provincial Park, located outside the plan area to the southeast, is a regional destination with camping, beach access, and trails.

Community-scale facilities include Miracle Beach Elementary School, the Oyster River Fire Hall, and places of worship that serve as gathering spaces.

The Saratoga Beach plan area functions as a small rural coastal community with limited local services. Residents rely on nearby service centres for many daily needs, while seasonal visitor activity increases pressure on local roads, parking, beach access, washrooms, and public spaces.

Transportation is centred on Highway 19A and local rural roads. Transit service and active transportation infrastructure are limited. Seasonal traffic, speeding, parking pressure, and gaps in walking and cycling connections are key transportation challenges.

2.3 Housing Context and Needs

Housing in the Saratoga Beach plan area reflects its role as both a residential

community and a visitor destination. Housing change is shaped by demand, water supply, on-site sewage suitability, environmental sensitivity, drainage, and hazard conditions.

2.3.1 Existing housing stock

The housing stock consists primarily of single detached dwellings on individually serviced parcels, with lot sizes reflecting historic subdivision patterns.

Single detached houses are by far the most common dwelling type. Mobile homes are the second most common type and provide a relatively more affordable housing form.

Visitor accommodation, including resorts and campgrounds, forms a significant part of the built environment. These uses support the tourism economy, but do not provide permanent housing supply. Some visitor accommodation may be used for longer-term occupancy, but these private arrangements are generally informal and may change over time.

2.3.2 Housing needs and local conditions

Housing demand in the Saratoga Beach plan area is shaped by its older age profile, small households, seasonal occupancy, and limited housing diversity.

Future housing should focus on modestly sized, ground-oriented options that respond to local needs, such as aging in place, multigenerational living, and smaller households, where site conditions and servicing capacity allow.

2.4 Economy

The Saratoga Beach plan area functions as a tourism-oriented and residential community within the broader Comox Valley economy. The Regional Growth Strategy identifies Saratoga Beach as a Settlement Node where growth is largely geared toward coastal tourism and residential housing. Local economic activity is closely tied to seasonal visitation, marine-related activity, outdoor recreation, and visitor accommodation, while many residents commute to employment centres elsewhere in the region.

Tourism is a key part of the local economy. Resorts, campgrounds, beaches, parks, and outdoor recreation support seasonal visitation and visitor-serving businesses. Seasonal visitation also increases demand on infrastructure, parking, transportation, beach access, washrooms, and public spaces.

Commercial activity is generally small in scale and focused on basic services for residents and visitors. Most retail, healthcare, and other daily services are accessed in nearby areas, including the Oyster River area, Courtenay, and Campbell River.

The plan area also includes home-based businesses and small-scale rural enterprises. These may include home occupations, domestic business, domestic industry, food and beverage production, value-added processing, trades, personal services, and other low-impact rural business activities.

These uses can support rural livelihoods and local economic resilience where they remain secondary to the main residential or agricultural use, are compatible with neighbouring properties, and can be supported by on-site servicing.

Local employment opportunities are limited. Many residents commute to Courtenay, Comox, Campbell River, and other regional centres for work. This reflects the area's role as a residential and visitor-serving community rather than a primary employment centre.

This context supports careful consideration of rural parcel size, zoning flexibility, and small-scale business activity, while maintaining rural character and respecting servicing, traffic, environmental, and neighbourhood compatibility limits.



SECTION 3

About This Plan



3.1 Purpose of the Local Area Plan

The Saratoga Beach LAP provides place-specific policy guidance for how the Saratoga Beach plan area may change over a planning horizon of the next five to ten years. This LAP applies to the area shown on Map 14.1, generally aligned with the Saratoga Beach Settlement Node identified in the Comox Valley Regional Growth Strategy. The Plan forms part of the Rural Comox Valley Official Community Plan (OCP).

The Saratoga Beach plan area is a rural coastal community where environmental conditions and infrastructure capacity influence what change may be feasible. Local beaches, forests, wetlands and wildlife are at the heart of the area's character, and public feedback highlights the community's deep connection to the local lands and waters. Water supply, on-site sewage systems, rainwater management, transportation access, and coastal hazards all present challenges and influence how the area will evolve over time.

This Plan links land use direction with these local conditions by identifying where change can be accommodated and services can be improved over the next 5 – 10 years, while protecting and maintaining the ecosystems, natural processes, and environmental values that have given rise to this place.

3.2 Plan Context

The LAP is part of the CVRD's broader planning framework. The Comox Valley Regional Growth Strategy identifies Saratoga Beach as a Settlement Node where limited, context-sensitive growth may occur outside municipal areas. The LAP builds on this

understanding, but makes clear that higher density is constrained under current servicing conditions. The Rural Comox Valley OCP establishes overall policy direction for the electoral areas, while this LAP provides more detailed guidance specific to the Saratoga Beach plan area.

The Plan responds to local conditions and planning issues identified through technical work and engagement, including environmental sensitivity, flood and drainage conditions, water supply, septic limitations, transportation access, tourism pressures, and rural character.

The Zoning Bylaw implements these policies at the parcel level by regulating permitted uses, density, lot size, and setbacks. Development permit areas, development approval information requirements, and other regulatory tools may also be used to address site-specific conditions and impacts. For clarity, Appendix A provides a high-level overview of which agencies and organizations are responsible for different types of decisions and services within the Saratoga Beach area.

This LAP forms part of the Rural OCP and does not replace or comprehensively update broader electoral area policies.



3.3 How This Plan is Used

This Plan uses key values, including both place-based values such as natural assets and ecosystem services and community resident values such as rural character and community amenities to guide land use and community change within the Saratoga Beach Plan area. It identifies where modest change may be appropriate, where constraints limit development, and what conditions should be considered when change is proposed.

The Plan informs future planning and land use decisions, including Zoning Bylaw amendments, development permit areas, and other regulatory tools. It also provides land use planning direction to property owners, residents, developers, agencies, and other interested parties.

Development proposals continue to be reviewed through separate CVRD regulatory processes. Infrastructure investments and servicing decisions are addressed through engineering, financial, and capital planning processes. This Plan does not determine infrastructure investment, but clarifies how servicing capacity, environmental conditions, and hazard constraints influence what forms of development-based change may be feasible.



3.4 Creating this Plan

PROJECT TIMELINE

WINTER 2025 Project initiation

Project scope, workplan, and background review initiated.



SUMMER 2025 What did we hear?



Community input reviewed and summarized to understand key values and policy directions, What We Heard report published.

WINTER 2026 How can we fill the gaps?

Consultants hired to develop an Ecosystem Classification Report, a Septic Suitability Analysis and explore future servicing needs to understand the carrying capacity of the LAP area.

SUMMER 2026 What are the priorities and next steps?

Draft LAP released, community open house, online survey, public hearing, and formal referrals to First Nations and statutory agencies.



SPRING 2025 What is the community's vision for the future?

Community open house, online survey, focus groups, referrals to First Nations, agencies and Strathcona Regional District.



FALL 2025 What is missing?

Identified gaps in knowledge on environmental baseline conditions, rainwater management, on-site septic system performance across the area, and further community servicing requirements.



SPRING 2026 What does the plan area look and feel like for the next ten years, given community preferences and landscape limitations?

- Policy drafting based on community inputs in the What We Heard Report
- Technical reports complete, understanding of carrying capacity and limitations on growth



FALL 2026 Final LAP

LAP is adopted, becomes the guiding policy framework for growth and development in the Saratoga Beach settlement node for the next 5 – 10 years.

3.5 How This Plan Was Developed

What We Heard (WWH) Report: Compiled public input and feedback from the 2025 community engagement process, which included:

- Community survey (358 responses)
- Community open house (100+ attendees)
- Resident's Association Meeting (Saratoga and Miracle Beach Residents Association (SAMBRA) and Macaulay Road and Area Neighbourhood Association (MRANA))
- Tourism, Business, and Development Focus Group
- Email correspondence and online Q&A on Engage Comox Valley website

Ecosystem Classification Report: Spatial analysis report creating a framework for the inventory collation of natural asset information, the valuation and weighing of those assets for prioritization purposes and managing and monitoring those assets into the future. The study mapped ecosystem values (Map 14.4) and provided recommendations to maintain or enhance ecosystems and natural assets within the LAP area, including identifying highest risks to these values.

Septic Suitability Analysis: Groundwater quality report assessed the impacts of current and future reliance on onsite sewage (septic) systems. Water quality data collected by the 2015 Groundwater Monitoring Program was analyzed against dwelling density and seasonal high water table depths (Map 14.5). The study recommends a maximum dwelling unit density of 5 units per hectare, in line with current zoning and Island Health standards, to limit the risk of groundwater quality impacts from continued use of onsite sewage systems. It also identified areas that have likely surpassed the environmental treatment capacity required for adequate effluent quality. It outlined specific minimum professional and regulatory requirements for onsite sewage systems that, if met, could responsibly support higher dwelling densities in specific locations in the Saratoga Beach LAP area.

CARRYING CAPACITY:

Population size or uses that a specific environment can sustainably support over time.

The carrying capacity of the Saratoga Beach LAP area is limited by septic suitability, sensitive environmental values, and ecosystem services. To prioritize staying within water quality guidelines and ecological limits of the Plan area, growth should either follow the modest pattern allowed under existing zoning, or sewage capacity must be higher to confidently support additional dwelling units, requiring a public sewer system.

Preliminary cost calculations for public sewer were completed at the time of this Plan's development. High capital costs for a wastewater treatment plant and collection system are likely unaffordable compared to average household income for residents in the settlement node. Financing, ongoing operations and maintenance costs were not considered in this high level analysis. Under current conditions, an affordable path for the CVRD to pursue a community sewer system in the Saratoga Beach LAP is not apparent. If conditions change and a community sewer system is sought by the community, the growth framework in this Plan should be reconsidered through additional public consultation and updated technical reports.



DEVELOPMENT OF OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES



SECTION 5 First Nations

Priority actions to reflect the CVRD's Indigenous Relations Strategic Driver.



SECTION 6 Environment, Climate Change and Natural Hazards

WWH Report: Environmental protection was the second highest-rated growth priority in the community survey and top community priority at the open house. **Ecosystem Classification Report:** Technical report identified areas of highest conservation values, environmental services at risk, and required actions to protect them.



SECTION 7 Water, Sewer and Rainwater Management

WWH Report: All forms of public engagement found water availability and onsite sewage systems were major community concern, citing impacts to public health and environment from failing systems, and increasing density. **Septic Suitability Analysis:** Technical report established a maximum dwelling density threshold to keep contaminant concentrations below water quality objectives. Also identified areas that have already exceeded this threshold and may not support more density with onsite sewer systems.



SECTION 8 Parks, Trails & Beaches

WWH Report: Parks and trails were the highest-ranked keywords, natural environmental protection was the second-highest ranked keyword to guide growth among the 2025 community survey respondents.



SECTION 9 Transportation

WWH Report: Road conditions, traffic, safety, and particularly parking were top themes in all forms of public engagement and fall largely in MOTT jurisdiction. Survey responses (66%) showed strong desire for safer local, non-vehicle connections and transit alternatives within the LAP area but low demand for regional-scale transportation or commuter network.



SECTION 10 Economy and Agriculture

WWH Report: Public engagement with local tourism operators confirmed high demand for visitor-serving accommodation and services and the Comox Valley Tourism Strategy supports more shoulder season and diversified tourism offerings in the Saratoga Beach area. Food services like restaurants, food trucks and agri-tourism are a key amenity gap according to the community survey response.



SECTION 11 Land Use

WWH Report: Protection of rural character and environment were the two most significant priority themes identified by the public engagement feedback. **Technical reports:** showed increasing development pattern could risk water quality objectives, ecosystem health, ecological connectivity and ecosystem services like flood attenuation, water availability and drainage. Without more detailed monitoring and field work, or higher servicing capacity through a community sewer system, the existing land use pattern represents the appropriate approach to maintain growth within the servicing and environmental limits of the LAP area.

3.6 Relationship to Housing Needs Reports and Provincial Housing Requirements

The LGA requires local governments to consider the most recent Housing Needs Report, and the housing information on which it is based, when developing an OCP and when amending OCP statements, map designations, or policies related to housing.

The Electoral Area C Housing Needs Report identifies housing need over a 20-year period. The LAP does not assume that all Electoral Area C housing need should be accommodated in the Saratoga Beach plan area. This LAP applies that information at the local level by considering where additional housing may be appropriate in the Saratoga Beach plan area, and where local constraints limit the scale, form, or timing of change.

The Saratoga Beach plan area is identified as a Settlement Node, but not all lands within the plan area can accommodate

additional housing to the same degree. Water supply, on-site sewage suitability, shallow groundwater, drainage capacity, flood risk, environmental sensitivity, road access, emergency access, and rural coastal character affect the type, density, and location of residential development that may be appropriate.

This LAP supports modest, ground-oriented housing options where site conditions and servicing capacity allow. More compact residential forms should be limited to locations where community water, wastewater management, drainage, access, and environmental constraints can be adequately addressed.



Saratoga Beach Plan Area at a Glance and Key Ideas

Saratoga Beach Area at a Glance

- ✓ **RURAL COASTAL COMMUNITY** on the Salish Sea within the CVRD
- ✓ **IDENTIFIED AS A SETTLEMENT NODE IN THE REGIONAL GROWTH STRATEGY**, where limited, context-sensitive growth may be considered
- ✓ **SARATOGA BEACH IS ONE OF VANCOUVER ISLAND'S PREMIER SANDY BEACHES**, a key natural feature of the community and a draw for residents and visitors alike
- ✓ **MIX OF PERMANENT RESIDENTS**, seasonal homes, and visitor accommodation
- ✓ **DETACHED HOUSING IS THE DOMINANT RESIDENTIAL** form in the surrounding rural area
- ✓ **TOURISM AND RECREATION ARE KEY ECONOMIC DRIVERS**, supported by coastal access and nearby attractions
- ✓ **THE AREA IS SHAPED BY SENSITIVE ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES**, including wetlands, streams, and coastal systems
- ✓ **WATER SERVICING IS PROVIDED BY THE BLACK-CREEK OYSTER BAY SYSTEM**; a second, private system is being modified and its users will soon be added to the public system
- ✓ **PROPERTIES RELY ON ON-SITE SEWAGE SYSTEMS**, with known constraints in some areas due to lot size, groundwater conditions, and system performance
- ✓ **LOCAL COMMERCIAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICES** are limited and dispersed
- ✓ **ENVIRONMENTAL CONSTRAINTS, SERVICING CAPACITY, AND HAZARD RISKS** are key factors influencing carrying capacity of the area

Key Ideas for Planning in the Saratoga Beach



PROTECT RURAL COASTAL CHARACTER, natural systems, public shoreline access, and water function



ALIGN LAND USE with environmental thresholds, hazard exposure, and servicing limitations



SUPPORT HOUSING that responds to community needs, a sustainable tourism economy, and enhanced recreation and local business opportunities



ENCOURAGE IMPROVEMENTS to road safety and conditions, parking and local mobility options

SECTION 4

Vision

4.1 Vision for the Saratoga Beach Area

Saratoga Beach is a rural coastal community defined by its beaches, wetlands, streams, and forests. The area is valued for its natural setting, shoreline access, and quiet coastal character.

Over the next decade, the community is expected to remain largely rural, with limited and gradual change shaped by environmental conditions, water supply, on-site sewage capacity, drainage, flood risk, and road access. Natural systems are protected, public access to the shoreline is maintained, and the area continues to function as both a residential community and a seasonal coastal destination.



4.2 Policy Directions

1. PROTECT RURAL COASTAL CHARACTER

Ensure new development fits the low-scale coastal setting and avoids impacts on neighbouring properties.

2. PROTECT NATURAL SYSTEMS AND ECOLOGICAL FUNCTION

Conserve wetlands, streams, riparian areas, and forests that support water quality, drainage, flood buffering, and habitat.

3. ALIGN GROWTH WITH INFRASTRUCTURE CAPACITY

Recognise limits related to water supply, on-site sewage systems, and rainwater management when considering future change.

4. PRIORITIZE ACCESSIBLE, GROUND-ORIENTED HOUSING OPTIONS

Encourage small-scale housing forms consistent with a rural community feel that support accessibility and multigenerational living where conditions allow.

5. MAINTAIN PUBLIC ACCESS TO THE SHORELINE

Support well-managed beach access that balances visitor use with neighbourhood livability and environmental protection.

6. ADVOCATE FOR IMPROVED ROAD SAFETY AND LOCAL MOBILITY

Support safer multimodal travel within the LAP area.

7. SUPPORT A SUSTAINABLE TOURISM ECONOMY

Recognise the area's role as a visitor destination while managing seasonal pressures on traffic, parking, housing availability, solid waste management facilities, and environmental quality.



SECTION 5

First Nations



5.1 Indigenous Relations and Cultural Heritage

The Saratoga Beach plan area is within the unceded traditional territory of K'ómoks First Nation and an area of overlapping interests with other Nations. This section focuses on land use planning and cultural heritage awareness.

5.1.1 Objective 1

Support early coordination on planning matters that may affect the place-specific interests of First Nations.

5.1.2 Policies

1. Work with K'ómoks First Nation on projects and planning updates within the Saratoga Beach LAP area that may affect cultural heritage, archaeological interests, water sources and availability, the Oyster River, shoreline areas, fish habitat, wetlands, or other matters identified by K'ómoks First Nation.
2. Use CVRD building permit and development application materials and public information to direct applicants to engage with K'ómoks First Nation early where proposed work may affect a known archaeological site, an area of archaeological potential, environmentally sensitive areas or lands within CHIP area.
3. Regularly update information materials for applicants to reflect current K'ómoks cultural heritage processes, CVRD practices, and relevant information received from applicants through development applications.
4. Consider place-specific information provided by Nations with overlapping traditional use interests and support referrals where planning matters affect these interests.

5.2.1 Objective 2

Apply CVRD Indigenous relations commitments through the Saratoga Beach LAP.

5.2.2 Policies

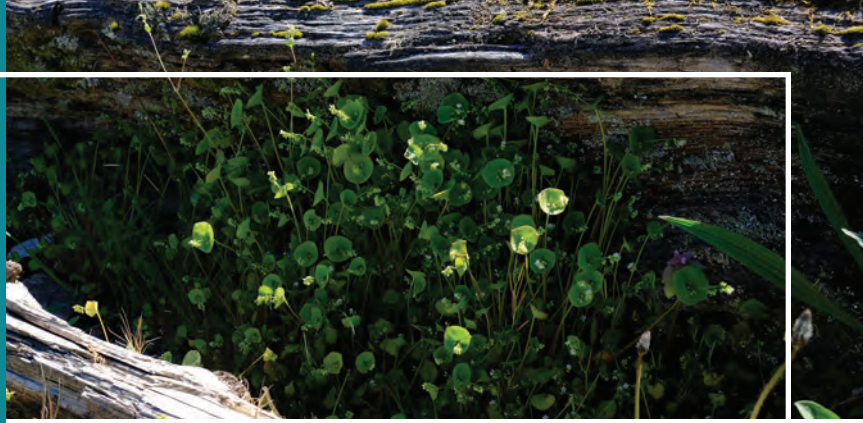
1. Implement the Saratoga Beach Local Area Plan in a manner consistent with the CVRD Indigenous Relations Framework.
2. Work with K'ómoks First Nation on opportunities to enhance community knowledge and appreciation of place-specific cultural heritage, including increasing interpretation and signage to educate on K'ómoks' history.





SECTION 6

Environment, Climate Change, and Natural Hazards



6.1 Environmental Systems and Sensitive Areas

6.1.1 Objective 1

Conserve key environmental systems supporting water quality, flood attenuation, habitat and ecological connectivity in the Saratoga Beach plan area.

6.1.2 Policies

1. Treat the Oyster River and Black Creek systems, including connected wetlands, riparian areas, tributaries, estuarine margins, and shoreline habitats, as priority environmental systems for conservation and restoration in the plan area.
2. Development should not be supported where it would reduce the functionality of wetland complexes within the plan area.
3. Rezoning or subdivision applications which would result in fragmentation of high conservation value areas should not be supported. Proposed lot lines should be located to avoid cutting through environmentally sensitive areas.
4. Consider introducing zoning regulations for parcels with subdivision potential to prevent fragmentation of high conservation value areas.
5. Development Approval Information should be used to assess the scale and risk of the proposed change where site-level impacts on wetlands, riparian areas, groundwater, drainage, habitat or cumulative impacts are uncertain or potentially significant.
6. Broaden scope of environmental DPAs to prioritize conservation of habitat networks, biodiversity and corridors
7. Support restoration and stewardship activities that improve riparian condition, wetland function, water quality, invasive species management, bank stability, and degraded habitat, particularly in areas of high restoration value or which were previously wetland or riparian ecosystems.



6.1.3 Objective 2

Support naturalization of hydrologic function to ensure land-use change is sustainable, resilient, and compatible with pre-existing conditions.

6.1.4 Policies

1. Conduct scale-appropriate watershed studies to fill knowledge gaps and understand risks associated with an altered hydrological regime.
2. Natural watershed conditions should inform site-specific rainwater management requirements.
3. Establish science-based watershed performance targets prior to significantly altering development patterns within the Saratoga Beach LAP area to address the combined impacts of development and climate change.

6.2 Climate Change Adaptation and Climate Resilience

6.2.1 Objective 1

Strengthen climate resilience by conserving and restoring natural systems in the Saratoga Beach plan area.

6.2.2 Policies

1. Recognize wetlands, riparian areas, estuarine areas, and treed areas as part of the Saratoga Beach plan area's natural asset and climate adaptation system because they store water, slow runoff, support infiltration, reduce erosion, and maintain ecological resilience.
2. Development should limit site disturbance and soil compaction, and prioritize retention of mature vegetation and tree cover.
3. In forested and interface areas, site planning should balance wildfire risk reduction in line with FireSmart principles with retention of vegetation that supports slope stability, hydrologic function, and habitat value.
4. Recognize the high biological carbon sequestration function of mature forests and explore methods of tree protection to maintain this function.



6.3 Natural Hazards and Risk Reduction

6.3.1 Objective 1

Reduce the community's exposure to natural hazards and climate change-related risks.

6.3.2 Policies

1. Avoid new development or intensification in known flood hazard areas and wildland-urban interface areas unless risk can be appropriately mitigated.
2. Rezoning and subdivision applications should not be supported where natural hazards and site conditions (e.g. shallow groundwater, septic limitations, and drainage constraints) cannot be addressed together without increasing risk on site.
3. Development applications should not be supported where they would increase or transfer risk to adjacent or downstream lands, roads, or emergency access routes.
4. Avoid development patterns that rely on future infrastructure solutions that are uncertain, unfunded, or inconsistent with known environmental and servicing limits should be avoided.
5. Lower-risk and more flood-compatible land uses are preferred over additional residential or visitor accommodation intensity in flood hazard areas.



SECTION 7

Water, Sewer, and Rainwater Management



7.1 Water

7.1.1 Objective 1

Align land use change with confirmed potable water supply, licence capacity, and water system constraints.

7.1.2 Policies

1. Land use change that would increase water demand will only be supported where potable water supply, system capacity, and licence capacity are confirmed.
2. Where connection to a community water system is available and sufficient capacity has been confirmed by the applicable water service provider, require connection to that system rather than long-term reliance on private wells.
3. Proposed development that depends on unconfirmed future water sources, licence expansion, system integration, or unplanned infrastructure upgrades should not be supported.
4. If development applications propose development patterns exceeding current licensed water capacity, require further servicing analysis and coordination with the applicable water service authority before considering additional density.

7.1.3 Objective 2

Limit impacts to groundwater and surface water quantity and quality.

7.1.4 Policies

1. Support water conservation measures that reduce summer demand, including low-flow fixtures, drought-tolerant landscaping, and reduced non-agricultural outdoor irrigation.

2. Coordinate water conservation education with relevant servicing authorities and adjacent jurisdictions where water supply interests are shared.
3. Recognize that responsible management of natural assets requires long-term monitoring programs to identify trends and quantify impacts.
4. Encourage private property owners to conduct regular inspection, maintenance, and groundwater quality testing of private wells, particularly where properties also rely on on-site sewage disposal.

7.2 Sewer and On-Site Sewage

7.2.1 Objective 1

Align land use and density with the demonstrated limits of on-site sewage disposal to consider the cumulative impacts from on-site sewage treatment and ensure wastewater is managed within the natural carrying capacity of the land.

7.2.2 Policies

1. Recognize that reliance on on-site sewage systems in the Saratoga Beach area presents a significant constraint on future growth and intensification.
2. As wastewater treatment capacity is limited by existing conditions in parts of Saratoga Beach area, proposed intensification of land uses relying on onsite sewage systems should be supported by long-term water quality monitoring, adherence to maintenance requirements, and cumulative impact assessments to protect the surrounding environment.

3. Subdivision and rezoning applications which increase dwelling unit density should only be supported where site and design requirements are consistent with established Island Health subdivision standards or where site conditions support further growth without worsening cumulative impacts.
4. Encourage remediation in capacity-constrained areas, including maintaining, upgrading or replacing failing or undersized on-site sewage systems.



7.2.3 Objective 2

Direct development away from capacity-constrained areas within the context of the CVRD's current lack of regulatory tools to monitor cumulative impacts over time and enforce maintenance.

7.2.4 Policies

1. Subdivision and rezoning applications which would increase density in capacity-constrained areas will not be supported until community sewer is available or an equivalent engineered solution has been approved.
2. Review permitted densities in commercial and residential zones within capacity-constrained areas due to the CVRD's current inability to monitor cumulative impacts and enforce long-term maintenance of private on-site sewage systems.

7.2.5 Objective 3

Plan for long-term liquid waste management.

7.2.6 Policies

1. Consider additional septic system management and monitoring approaches in capacity-constrained areas where further development may increase risks to public health, groundwater quality, or environmental health.
2. Identify and address cumulative impacts through a Receiving Environment Monitoring Program that monitors changes in groundwater and surface water quality.
3. Support stronger coordination among CVRD, Island Health, and other relevant authorities on septic system oversight, cumulative impacts, and implications for groundwater quality and the receiving environment.
4. Support practical, accessible and educational resources on septic system maintenance and relationship between on-site sewage performance, groundwater conditions, and development pressure to empower property owners to maintain existing systems effectively
5. Ensure wastewater discharge associated with development proposals does not result in negative cumulative impacts.
6. Continue to explore pathways to resolve impacts to groundwater quality from existing septic systems through tools such as a Liquid Waste Management Plan



7.3 Rainwater Management

7.3.1 Objective 1

Maintain drainage function and avoid development which increases runoff, flooding, erosion, or water quality impacts.

7.3.2 Policies

1. Recognize that the absence of a centralized stormwater collection system constrains development intensity in areas where site conditions limit on-site rainwater management.
2. Increased lot coverage should not be supported where limited infiltration area, shallow groundwater, wetland proximity, or constrained drainage limits feasibility of on-site rainwater management.
3. Rainwater management review must consider cumulative effects on neighbouring properties, roadside ditches, wetlands, watercourses, groundwater, and coastal receiving environments.
4. Site design should incorporate infiltration, pervious surfaces, vegetated swales, soil retention, and other low-impact measures suited to local groundwater and soil conditions where possible.
5. Advocate to MOTT to advance sustainable rainwater management approaches within road rights of way.





SECTION 8

Protected Areas and Community Recreation



8.1 Parks, Trails & Beaches

8.1.1 Objective 1

Support community access to natural areas and recreation amenities by expanding the public park and trail network.

8.1.2 Policies

1. **High Priority Action:** Plan and develop connected and accessible trails and greenways strategically throughout the LAP area to support nature-based recreation, connect key community destinations, and link where possible into the CVRD's broader Regional Trail Network.
2. Work to identify and secure public park and trail sites in the Saratoga Beach area, particularly waterfront or near-waterfront sites, ecologically significant lands, and opportunities to expand existing parks.
3. Explore additional licenses of occupation for the purpose of park amenities over existing MOTT-owned public beach access points.
4. Advocate to MOTT to address encroachments on public beach access.
5. Work to identify additional parking opportunities for beach users in the Saratoga Beach LAP area.
6. Explore working with the Province to:
 - a. Pursue a license of occupation to manage the foreshore of Saratoga Beach as a CVRD park, or;
 - b. Improve management of the foreshore to a level that responds to the peak season beach use.

8.1.3 Objective 2

Plan parks to protect and maintain ecologically significant natural areas.

8.1.4 Policies

1. When evaluating lands for parkland acquisition or trail development, consider the evaluation criteria of the CVRD Regional Parks & Trails Strategic Plan, particularly lands that provide ecological value and ecosystem services, including riparian buffers, wetlands, wildlife corridors, and sensitive ecosystems.
2. Prioritize acquiring and protecting wetland complexes in the Saratoga Beach area.
3. Consider environmental integrity and community access in park and trail management plans.



8.1.5 Objective 3

Support Inclusive, Connected, and Safe Parks, Trails and Beaches.

8.1.6 Policies

1. **High Priority Action:** Explore a trail connection along Clarkson Road to Miracle Beach Provincial Park in coordination with MOTT and BC Parks to help spread peak season beach visitation more evenly across the area
2. Work with community partners to minimize impacts such as unauthorized fires, noise, overnight use, litter, and off-leash animals on the public beach.
3. Work with MOTT to improve provincially managed beach access points for peak seasonal use, including signage, additional parking, removing encroachments and providing temporary sanitation and changeroom facilities
4. Work with community partners and MOTT to provide regularly serviced waste and recycling receptacles at beach access points to accommodate peak seasonal visitation.
5. Explore funding mechanisms to address community-identified amenity gaps in the Saratoga Beach area, including playgrounds, picnic tables, benches, community gathering spaces, accessible beach surfaces, and adaptive equipment.



8.1.7 Objective 4

Foster education, stewardship, and community engagement related to beaches, parks and trails.

8.1.8 Policies

1. Strengthen coordinated educational and wayfinding signage at key locations to:
 - a. promote clear identification of public beach access;
 - b. share information on the unique ecological values, cultural history, and hazard information of Saratoga Beach.
2. Support opportunities for volunteer networks and community groups to conduct beach cleanups, ecological restoration, trail building and amenity improvements.





SECTION 9

Transportation



9.1 Ministry of Transportation and Transit advocacy

9.1.1 Objective 1

Work with the Ministry of Transportation and Transit to address chronic challenges relating to road infrastructure management, upgrades and maintenance outside the regional district's regulatory authority.

9.1.2 Policies

The CVRD will advocate to MOTT to

1. **High Priority Action:** Meaningfully address community priorities relating to traffic, parking, road condition, shoulder usability, speed management, and safe pedestrian and cyclist crossings in the plan area through the MOTT workplan, with priority attention to Highway 19A intersections and access points serving Saratoga Beach, including Regent Road/Catherwood Road and Miracle Beach Drive.
2. Amend Provincial policies, guidelines, and standards to explicitly address transportation considerations in semi-rural versus rural contexts outside of municipalities, including evaluating road standards, speed limits, conditions and maintenance within the local context of the Saratoga Beach LAP area.
3. Consider reducing speed limits on primary roads in the Saratoga Beach area such as Clarkson Avenue and Miracle Beach Drive.
4. Promote adherence to speed limits, including locating speed reader boards in high traffic locations, entrances to the community and the zone around Miracle Beach Elementary School.
5. Explore temporary traffic calming measures to manage traffic speed during peak season in the Saratoga Beach LAP area.
6. Assess the impact of the Ministry's current on-road parking approach adjacent to Saratoga Beach on nearby neighbourhoods, including circulation and pedestrian safety within the LAP area.
7. Support expansion of public beach parking at the Seaman Road beach access park between Clarkson Avenue and Henderson Road.
8. Address road encroachments to prioritize public interest, access and safety.



9.2 Off-Road Active Transportation

9.2.1 Objective 1

Plan and develop infrastructure which improves safe and active local travel for pedestrians, cyclists and other micromobility users within the Saratoga Beach area.

9.2.2 Policies

1. Prioritize development of trails which improve community connectivity to:
 - a. High Priority Action: The Oyster River commercial hub;
 - b. Miracle Beach Provincial Park;
 - c. Saratoga Beach access points;
 - d. Miracle Beach Elementary School;
2. Work with the Strathcona Regional District (SRD) and MOTT to support projects which enhance connectivity and shared recreational opportunities for residents of both regional districts (e.g. retrofitting or upgrading Regent Road bridge).
3. Provide safe and secure bicycle parking facilities at strategic locations throughout the Saratoga Beach LAP area, including CVRD-managed parks and beach access points to reduce vehicle parking pressure.
4. Evaluate opportunities to expand bikeshare programs to the Saratoga Beach LAP area in collaboration with MOTT to locate e-bikes and e-scooters at Oyster River transit exchange, and CVRD-managed parks and beach access points.

9.2.3 Objective 2

Plan and develop off-road transportation infrastructure consistent with the rural character of the community, focusing on trails and multi-use paths which provide recreational and connectivity benefits.

9.2.4 Policies

1. Prioritize off-road transportation infrastructure which reflect characteristics of “regional trails” outlined in the CVRD Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan and “off-road multi-use path” in the CVRD Regional Active Transportation Network Plan.
2. Ensure trail development considers multi-uses including pedestrian activities, cycling, and micromobility.
3. Locate trails where infrastructure would not result in ecological impacts or degradation.

9.3 Transit

9.3.1 Objective 1

Plan transit options consistent with the rural character of the community, with a focus on increasing local accessibility to the beach and nearby services.

9.3.2 Policies

1. Evaluate transit routing and frequency as part of the Transit Future Action Plan reviews to achieve better transit connections:
 - a. High Priority Action: To the City of Courtenay;
 - b. Within the Plan area;
 - c. To the City of Campbell River.
2. Explore the development of public transit solutions during peak summer months, including working with private landholders to consider possible shuttle and park and ride options.
3. Work with the SRD and MOTT to develop an expanded mobility hub at the Oyster River commercial hub with a range of transportation services for rural residents including but not limited to transit stops, park and ride facilities, bike storage, washrooms, wayfinding and potential bike/car share stations.
4. Collaborate with the SRD to strengthen transit connection opportunities between the Saratoga Beach LAP area and key destinations in the SRD.
5. Evaluate transportation options to support aging population access to critical services.





SECTION 10

Economy and Agriculture



10.1 Visitor Accommodation and Visitor-Serving Uses

10.1.1 Objective 1

Enable visitor-serving commercial uses that strengthen the local economy and responsible tourism.

10.1.2 Policies

1. Work with tourist commercial property owners to address existing siting, servicing, and non-conforming issues that affect compliance and business continuity.
2. Support activities, events, and amenities that promote shoulder-season tourism, agritourism, and complementary local services where they do not increase pressure on constrained or sensitive sites.
3. Recognize marine and river access as critical for responsible tourism recreation activities.
4. Work with tourist commercial property owners to explore options for low-intensity tourist accommodation uses that complement the area's coastal and rural character such as temporary glamping facilities and sleeping pods.
5. Encourage visitor-serving commercial uses on commercial properties which are low-impact and do not rely on permanent infrastructure in hazardous or environmentally sensitive areas, including mobile vending (food trucks), farmers' markets, water-based equipment rental and water-based recreation services.

10.2 Agriculture and Rural Compatibility

10.2.1 Objective 1

Protect agricultural uses and support complementary uses within and surrounding the Saratoga Beach Settlement Node.

10.2.2 Policies

1. **High Priority Action:** Support temporary use permits for agri-tourism, farm market and food truck uses on properties where not already permitted.
2. Support agricultural-related value-added economic uses where they complement farming activity (e.g. food processing).
3. Support non-accommodation agri-tourism uses where they complement farming activity. Examples may include farm tours, u-picks, culinary tourism, and temporary seasonal events.
4. Explore opportunities to broaden domestic agriculture zoning to support local food production and household resiliency.
5. Require new development adjacent to ALR land or active farm parcels to provide buffering, setbacks, fencing, lot layout, drainage, and site design measures, consistent with the Province's Guide to Edge Planning and other applicable provincial or Agricultural Land Commission guidance, to protect agricultural use and reduce conflict with non-farm development.



SECTION 11

Land Use



Land use in the plan area is shaped by rural coastal character, sensitive environmental systems, drainage and flood constraints, water supply limits, on-site sewage conditions, seasonal tourism pressure, and limited local services.

Settlement Node status supports growth in principle when supported with appropriate servicing. In the Saratoga Beach plan area, lack of liquid waste management facilities is the most significant limiting factor. Growth is most appropriate where land is already planned for settlement, servicing capacity can be demonstrated, hazards and environmental constraints can be addressed, and impacts on rural character, tourism function, and road access can be managed.

The policies below provide direction for where additional development potential may be appropriate, where constraints should limit change, and how subdivision, housing, tourist commercial, commercial, light industrial, mixed use, and other uses should fit local conditions. Map 14.2 shows the land use designations within the Plan area.



11.1 Growth Management

11.1.1 Objective 1

Maintain the existing land use pattern to not exceed local carrying capacity, including infrastructure limits, water resources, drainage capacity, hazard conditions, or ecological systems until servicing capacity can support additional growth.

11.1.2 Policies

1. Rezoning or OCP amendments that increase allowable dwelling unit density should not be supported if it would create capacity constrained lots, until community water and community sewer are available and sufficient capacity is demonstrated or cumulative impacts can be mitigated.
2. Existing density and land use intensity patterns should be maintained given current servicing, drainage, hazard, and ecological constraints.
3. Where future studies, including a Liquid Waste Management Plan, Master Drainage Plan or other servicing, environmental, or hazard assessments, identify areas capable of accommodating increased density, the CVRD may consider targeted rezoning for those areas.
4. Servicing improvements should be considered together with environmental capacity, hazard conditions, road access, emergency access, and rural coastal character before additional density is supported.

11.2 Subdivision Referral Considerations

11.2.1 Objective 1

Work with MOTT to ensure any new proposed lots fit local servicing, drainage, hazard, environmental, access, and agricultural interface conditions.

11.2.2 Policies:

1. Subdivision should not rely on variances, floodplain exemptions, setback reductions, irregular lot shapes, constrained building envelopes, or roadside parking to create new usable lots.
2. Subdivision that increases the number of new lots served by a single access, extends or creates dead-end roads, or occurs in an area with limited evacuation options should demonstrate that emergency response and evacuation can be supported.
3. Subdivision should not create lots that depend on informal beach access parking, inaccessible roads, or MOTT rights-of-way for basic site function.
4. Work with MOTT to enforce compliance of stormwater and rainwater management and drainage design guidelines during approval of subdivisions and the issuance of any permits in order to prevent increased flood risks and stream erosion downstream of any future development.
5. Consider a Subdivision Servicing Bylaw for the Saratoga Beach LAP area if subdivision activity increases to a scale that could significantly alter the development pattern, in order to address rainwater management, storm drainage, tree clearing, sediment and erosion control, and other priority works and services.

11.3 Residential

11.3.1 Objective 1

Support housing options that respond to local needs while staying within servicing, drainage, hazard, environmental, and rural character limits.

11.3.2 Residential Development Capacity Context

The Electoral Area C Housing Needs Report applies at the electoral area scale and does not assign a fixed housing unit target to the Saratoga Beach plan area. Within the plan area, residential development capacity is constrained by water supply, on-site sewage suitability, rainwater management, flood risk, environmental sensitivity, road access, emergency access, and rural coastal character.

This LAP therefore identifies the housing forms that may be appropriate under different local conditions rather than assuming uniform residential intensification across the plan area.



Housing Form	Local Role	Most Appropriate Locations	Key constraints
Secondary suites	Aging in place, long-term rental, caregiver housing, and multigenerational living	Existing residential areas where water, wastewater, parking, and access can be addressed	Septic capacity, water supply, parking, access, and building code requirements
Carriage houses and other accessory dwellings	Flexible family housing, aging in place, long-term rental, and multigenerational living	Larger or less constrained residential lots with adequate space for buildings, servicing, parking, drainage, and setbacks	Lot size, septic capacity, lot coverage, drainage, setbacks, access, vegetation retention, and neighbouring impacts
Smaller lots or compact ground-oriented housing	Limited option until future servicing and site conditions support additional density	Locations with confirmed water supply, wastewater management, drainage capacity, safe access, and manageable environmental and hazard constraints	Servicing capacity, flood risk, shallow groundwater, drainage, emergency access, and environmental review
Mobile home parks	Existing mobile home park use provides relatively affordable form of housing	Existing location which currently has a mobile home park use and a private shared septic system, possible additional suitable sites	Legal non-conforming zoning resulting in limitations on updates and improvements, servicing capacity
Multi-unit housing or supportive housing	Generally not a near-term housing form	Sites near services or transportation access where water, wastewater, drainage, emergency access, and daily needs can be addressed	Servicing, scale, access, emergency response, proximity to daily needs, and compatibility with rural character
Residential conversion of tourist commercial lands	Generally not supported because it may reduce visitor-serving land and increase residential exposure in constrained locations	Limited cases where conversion would reduce long-term risk, address servicing constraints, and provide a clear public benefit	Loss of visitor-serving land, flood risk, wastewater constraints, access, parking, and precedent

11.3.3 Policies

1. Support modest ground-oriented housing forms where they improve housing choice and can be accommodated within local water, wastewater, drainage, access, parking, environmental, and hazard constraints.
2. In reviewing land use applications and proposed OCP amendments, the CVRD may consider and give preference to the following considerations if servicing constraints can be addressed:
 - a. Opportunities for seniors housing and housing which applies universal accessibility principles.
 - b. Housing that achieves net positive environmental outcomes (e.g., zero emissions, conservation covenants, park land dedication, regeneration of impacted lands).

11.3.4 Objective 2

Support housing options that address affordability, rental, accessibility, and aging in place housing in forms that fit Saratoga Beach area conditions.

11.3.5 Policies

1. Support rental housing primarily through secondary suites, carriage houses, long-term rental of existing dwellings, and other small-scale housing forms that can be accommodated on existing lots.
2. Explore options to develop site-specific mobile home park zoning to address existing lawful non-conforming use and identify additional suitable sites to maintain and expand mobile home park uses as an affordable local housing form.

11.4 Tourist Commercial

11.4.1 Objective 1

Retain tourist commercial lands for visitor accommodation and related visitor-serving uses.

11.4.2 Policies

1. Tourist commercial lands should be retained primarily for visitor accommodation and related visitor-serving uses. Conversion of tourist commercial lands to primarily residential use should not be supported.
2. Redevelopment of waterfront commercial properties subject to coastal flood hazard risk should prioritize less permanent forms of development including campgrounds, RV parks and glamping.
3. Create guidance tools for tourist-commercial development in flood hazard areas, including guidelines for lower impact interim uses and sea level rise design guidelines.

11.4.3 Objective 2

Explore accessory commercial and tourist-commercial uses on properties near the tourist-commercial zones where this strengthens business and tourism opportunities and can be accommodated within local constraints.

11.4.4 Policies

1. Support updated zoning within a tourist-commercial interface area to allow additional commercial and tourist-commercial uses which are small-scale, directly related to visitor or temporary workforce accommodation or visitor-serving commercial activity and functionally connected to an existing tourist-commercial area.
2. Proposed tourist-commercial edge uses must maintain compatibility with nearby residential uses and rural coastal character.

- Food trucks, carts, and other mobile commercial uses may be supported beyond existing zoning limitations on approved tourist-commercial edge, community, or event sites where they remain temporary, fit the site, and manage parking, access, waste, noise, and servicing impacts.

11.5 Commercial, Light Industrial and Mixed Uses

11.5.1 Objective 1



Support small-scale commercial, service commercial, light industrial, and mixed uses in locations that meet local needs, support visitor and employment activity, and fit rural coastal conditions.

11.5.2 Policies

- New commercial, service commercial, light industrial, and mixed uses should be adjacent to existing commercial and industrial sites or nodes.
- Rezoning from residential to commercial, service commercial, light industrial, and mixed uses should not result in additional dwelling unit density (without restricting building form).
- Commercial and mixed uses should remain modest in scale and oriented to local services, visitor, recreational or employment needs suited to the Saratoga Beach area.
- Mixed-use development may be considered where all uses are suitable for the site and will not conflict with neighbouring land uses.
- Commercial and mixed-use development should support end of trip facilities for active transportation, particularly near existing services, beach access points, and visitor-serving areas.
- Support requirements for the provision of accessible, screened, and wildlife-resistant garbage, recycling, and organics storage in all non-residential zones.
- Support improvements to the existing recycling drop-off site (2185 Regent Road) to improve local access to waste diversion and permit expanded recycling services consistent with the direction of the Solid Waste Management Plan to support equitable access to services.
- Encourage institutional, commercial, and industrial waste reduction and diversion in non-residential and visitor-serving uses, consistent with the direction of the Solid Waste Management Plan to improve institutional, commercial and industrial waste reduction and diversion.



11.5.3 Objective 2

Reduce conflict between pre-existing uses and new development such as auto racing, recreation commercial uses, and surrounding residential uses.

11.5.4 Policies

1. Where interface uses pre-date surrounding development, encourage property owners to reduce impacts through enhanced mitigative measures such as buffering landscaping, noise suppression and community outreach.
2. Expansion of existing auto racing use should not be permitted.
3. Future land use decisions near the outdoor racetrack should avoid creating new residential patterns that intensify land use conflict.

11.6 Other Uses

11.6.1 Objective 1

Support local-serving assembly, institutional, utility, and outdoor recreation uses where they fit rural character, servicing capacity, environmental limits, hazard conditions, and nearby uses.

11.6.2 Policies

1. Assembly and institutional uses may be supported where they meet local needs and demonstrate that site conditions, servicing capacity, safe access, parking, drainage, and compatibility with nearby residential uses can be addressed.
2. Assembly and outdoor recreation uses should be located and managed to avoid spillover parking, noise, lighting impacts, fire risk, and conflicts with beach access, local roads and neighbouring uses, particularly during peak periods.
3. Infrastructure uses should be planned and reviewed in relation to the land use pattern they may enable, including whether they would increase development pressure in areas constrained by flood risk, drainage, groundwater, wastewater limitations, cultural heritage concerns, or sensitive ecosystems.
4. Assembly, institutional, and outdoor recreation uses involving hazardous materials, high water demand, wastewater generation, outdoor storage, soil disturbance, or significant truck traffic should not be supported where they could affect groundwater, surface water, wetlands, coastal water quality, or nearby residential areas.

SECTION 12

Implementation and Monitoring



Implementation of the LAP involves multiple agencies, governments, property owners, and service providers with different responsibilities and decision-making authorities. Appendix A provides a summary of key roles and responsibilities related to land use planning, infrastructure, environmental management, transportation, and development approvals.

12.1 Implementation

12.1.1 Objective 1

Work towards alignment of CVRD strategies, including land use and infrastructure plans, with carrying capacity findings of the Saratoga Beach LAP.

12.1.2 Policies

1. Review zoning in the plan area where existing regulations may allow a scale, form, or intensity of use that exceeds known water, wastewater, drainage, flood, environmental, or access constraints.
2. Advocate to MOTT to ensure subdivision referral policies of this LAP are considered by the approving officer.

12.2 Development Permit Areas

12.2.1 Objective 1

Use targeted development permit area updates, where needed, to address plan area-specific site conditions and constraints at the application stage.

12.2.2 Policies

1. Consider one or more Saratoga Beach-specific development permit areas, or targeted amendments to existing development permit areas where current tools do not adequately address local conditions and constraints, including carrying capacity limitations.

2. Develop plan area-specific DPA guidelines to address site conditions, areas of high conservation value, cumulative impacts of on-site sewage systems, and/or other land use compatibility issues.

12.2.3 Objective 2

Implement tools to enable the creation of a tourist-commercial transition area.

12.2.4 Policies

1. Explore establishing a limited tourist-commercial transition area adjacent to existing tourist-commercial-zoned properties to allow visitor-serving accommodation and commercial uses on residential parcels, provided the residential use remains principal.
2. Define eligible accessory visitor-serving uses through a future zoning review.
3. Consider mixed uses only where site conditions can support the added activity.
4. Map any future tourist-commercial transition area to inform a future zoning and development permit implementation process that defines the zoning framework, eligibility criteria, servicing considerations, environmental constraints, and new development permit area guidelines.
5. Review the transition area after implementation to confirm whether accessory visitor-serving uses are operating at a scale compatible with nearby

residential uses, rural coastal character, servicing limits, environmental conditions, and cumulative impacts.

6. Until zoning updates and development permit area guidelines have been established, enable the use of temporary use permits to support visitor-serving accommodation and commercial uses within the tourist-commercial transition area on a temporary basis.

12.3 Development Approval Information

12.3.1 Objective 1

Strengthen Development Approval Information requirements to assess plan area-specific constraints where a rezoning, development permit or temporary use permit proposal may increase development potential, servicing demand, or site disturbance.

12.3.2 Policies

1. Update the Development Approval Information Area Bylaw to require information that addresses cumulative impacts, not only site-level impacts where development may increase sewage loading, groundwater risk, drainage impacts, environmental impacts, traffic, parking demand, beach access pressure, or conflict with nearby uses.



12.4 Monitoring and Future Updates

12.4.1 Objective 1

Track local conditions and application patterns so future decisions remain aligned with plan area constraints.

12.4.2 Policies

1. Monitor rezoning, development permit, temporary use permit, and subdivision activity to identify cumulative pressure in constrained locations.
2. Track changes in water servicing, on-site sewage information, drainage conditions, flood and erosion information, and environmental mapping where they may affect future land use decisions.
3. Use monitoring results to identify whether targeted amendments are needed to the LAP, Zoning Bylaw, development permit tools, Development Approval Information procedures, or subdivision referral practices.
4. Consider a focused review of this Plan if new technical information, servicing changes, hazard information, legislative changes, or repeated application patterns show that the policy direction is no longer aligned with local conditions.
5. Future RGS or Rural OCP amendments should review and consider the growth management framework in this LAP and make any necessary amendments to the Settlement Node language.
6. Where monitoring shows that an area cannot reasonably support the scale or form of change being proposed, consider targeted bylaw amendments or further study before supporting additional change.
7. Explore the development of a Watershed Protection Service to enable water quality monitoring and assessment activities to implement servicing policies of this LAP.
8. Undertake education initiatives in the community to ensure technical environmental and septic suitability findings and LAP implications are well understood.

SECTION 13

Understanding Terms

Definitions in this section are provided for general understanding and readability. Where a term is defined in the Comox Valley Regional Growth Strategy, the Rural Comox Valley OCP, the Rural Comox Valley Zoning Bylaw, or another applicable enactment, that definition prevails in the event of any inconsistency.

These terms do not create new development permissions, approval requirements, technical standards, or land use categories. They should be read together with the applicable bylaws, policies, regulations, and approval processes.

Aging in place

Being able to remain in the same home or community as needs change over time, including as a person grows older or needs housing that is easier to access or maintain. In the Saratoga Beach plan area, this often relates to modest housing options such as secondary suites and carriage houses.

Capacity-constrained area

Areas which have a density of more than five dwelling units/ hectare and rely on on-site septic systems for wastewater management.

Carriage house

A form of accessory dwelling unit permitted by the Zoning Bylaw, typically located within a detached building on the same lot as a principal dwelling.

Carrying capacity

Population size or needs that a specific environment can sustainably support over time. In this Plan, carrying capacity is used to link future land use direction to real on-the-ground constraints rather than abstract growth assumptions.

Constrained location

An area where development potential is limited by one or more local conditions, including flood risk, erosion, shallow

groundwater, on-site sewage limitations, drainage constraints, sensitive ecosystems, steep slopes, limited access, servicing limitations, or cumulative impacts.

Context-sensitive growth

Small-scale change that responds to local conditions such as servicing capacity, environmental constraints, hazard areas, and rural character.

Cultural Heritage Investigation Permit (CHIP)

A permit required by K'ómoks First Nation before ground disturbance in areas of known or potential archaeological significance within K'ómoks core territory.

Cumulative impacts

The combined effects of multiple changes over time. In the Saratoga Beach plan area, cumulative impacts may include increased sewage loading, groundwater risk, drainage impacts, traffic, parking demand, beach access pressure, vegetation loss, habitat fragmentation, seasonal pressure, or conflict with neighbouring uses.

Development

For readability in this Plan, development generally includes changes to land use, density, buildings, structures, site layout, servicing, access, parking, drainage, land alteration, and subdivision.

Subdivision is a form of development where the policy context relates to land use change, site design, servicing, environmental protection, hazard conditions, access, drainage, or cumulative impacts.

Where a statutory approval, permit, bylaw, or application type is referenced, the applicable enactment determines the meaning of each term.

Ecological connectivity

The linkage of natural areas that allows ecological systems, including water, wildlife, and vegetation, to function across the landscape.

Emergency access

Access that supports emergency response, evacuation, fire protection, and safe movement during hazard events or peak seasonal conditions. Emergency access may be affected by road width, road condition, congestion, parking, flood exposure, wildfire risk, and limited alternate routes.

Environmental feature

A natural feature such as a wetland, stream, riparian area, shoreline area, estuarine margin, or other landscape feature that contributes to habitat, drainage, water quality, flood storage, or ecological function.

Floodplain

Land that is subject to flooding, including coastal and low-lying areas, as identified through mapping or technical analysis.

Groundwater

Water located below the ground surface that supplies wells, supports ecosystems, and influences drainage and soil conditions.

Hazard area

An area subject to natural hazards such as flooding, erosion, steep slopes, wildfire risk, or limited access, where development may be restricted or require additional review.

Hydrologic function

The way land and water features store, filter, slow, convey, or release water across the landscape. In the Saratoga Beach plan area, hydrologic function is closely tied to wetlands, streams, shallow groundwater, drainage patterns, and flood buffering.

Incremental change

Small-scale change that occurs over time and can be assessed in relation to local servicing, drainage, environmental, access, and hazard conditions. Incremental change does not mean that all small-scale development is appropriate in all locations.

Intensification

A change that increases use, density, occupancy, activity, servicing demand, lot coverage, traffic, parking demand, wastewater generation, runoff, site disturbance, or hazard exposure on a property.

Land use change

A change in how land or buildings are used, including a change from one use to another, an increase in density or intensity, or a change that creates different servicing, access, environmental, hazard, or compatibility considerations.

Licence capacity

The amount of water authorised for use under an applicable water licence or approval. In the Saratoga Beach plan area, licence capacity is relevant to whether additional water demand can be supported by existing or proposed water systems.

Local Area Plan (LAP)

A place-specific policy plan adopted as part of the Official Community Plan to guide land use and change in the Saratoga Beach plan area.

Local conditions

The physical, environmental, servicing, access, and land use conditions that affect whether a proposed change is appropriate in a specific location. In the Saratoga Beach plan area, local conditions include water supply, on-site sewage suitability, shallow groundwater, drainage, flood risk, environmental sensitivity, road access, emergency access, seasonal use, and nearby land uses.

Multigenerational living

A housing arrangement in which more than one generation of a family lives on the same property or in closely related housing forms, such as a principal dwelling with a secondary suite or carriage house.

Natural drainage function

The movement, storage, infiltration, and release of rainwater through natural or semi-natural features such as soils, vegetation, wetlands, watercourses, ditches, low-lying areas, and connected drainage paths.

On-site sewage system

A system that treats and disposes of wastewater on the same property where it is generated, commonly referred to as a septic system.

Rainwater management

The management of rainwater to maintain natural drainage patterns and protect water quality, groundwater, and downstream areas, particularly in areas with limited drainage infrastructure.

Riparian area

The land beside a stream, wetland, river, or other waterbody where vegetation, soils, and moisture conditions are influenced by water and help support bank stability, habitat, and water quality. This aligns with the OCP glossary concept of riparian areas as terrestrial areas shaped by the combined influence of water, high water tables, and wet soils.

Rural coastal character

The low-scale, coastal, semi-rural character of the Saratoga Beach plan area, shaped by beaches, wetlands, streams, forests, rural roads, detached housing, visitor accommodation, limited local services, seasonal activity, and close connections to the natural setting.

Seasonal pressure

Increased demand during peak visitor periods, especially in summer. In the Saratoga Beach plan area, seasonal pressure may affect traffic, parking, beach access, washrooms, waste management, noise, short-term accommodation, emergency access, and neighbourhood livability.

Sensitive ecosystem

An ecosystem that is especially vulnerable to disturbance because of its habitat value, rarity, fragility, hydrologic role, or ecological condition. In the Saratoga Beach plan area, this includes features such as wetlands, riparian areas, and other environmentally sensitive lands that shape where change may or may not be feasible.

Servicing capacity

The ability of water supply, wastewater, drainage, road access, and emergency access systems to support development based on confirmed service availability, existing infrastructure, licence limits, environmental conditions, operational constraints, and applicable approval requirements.

Settlement Node

An area identified in the Regional Growth Strategy identified to accommodate compact forms of development but which are not contiguous with Municipal Areas. Settlement Nodes shall accommodate growth through a balance of new development, intensification of existing density and infrastructure improvements which need to include the provision of appropriate water and sewer services

Shallow groundwater

Groundwater that is close to the ground surface. In the Saratoga Beach plan area, shallow groundwater can limit the performance of on-site sewage systems, constrain drainage, and affect building and subdivision feasibility.

Site alteration

A physical change to land, including clearing, excavation, filling, grading, drainage changes, soil disturbance, vegetation removal, shoreline alteration, or other works that may affect environmental conditions, hazards, drainage, access, or servicing.

Subdivision

A form of development that creates new parcels, adjusts parcel boundaries, creates a bare land strata, or otherwise divides land under applicable provincial legislation.

Tourist-commercial transition area

Areas where existing tourist-commercial and residential properties are located near each other, and where limited commercial and tourist-commercial, visitor-serving uses may be considered through rezoning subject to servicing, environmental, access, parking, hazard, and compatibility constraints.

Waste diversion

Activities that reduce the amount of material sent to landfill, including recycling, organics diversion, reuse, salvage, repair, and deconstruction.

Wastewater

Used water from residential, commercial, or other activities that requires treatment or disposal.

Working landscape

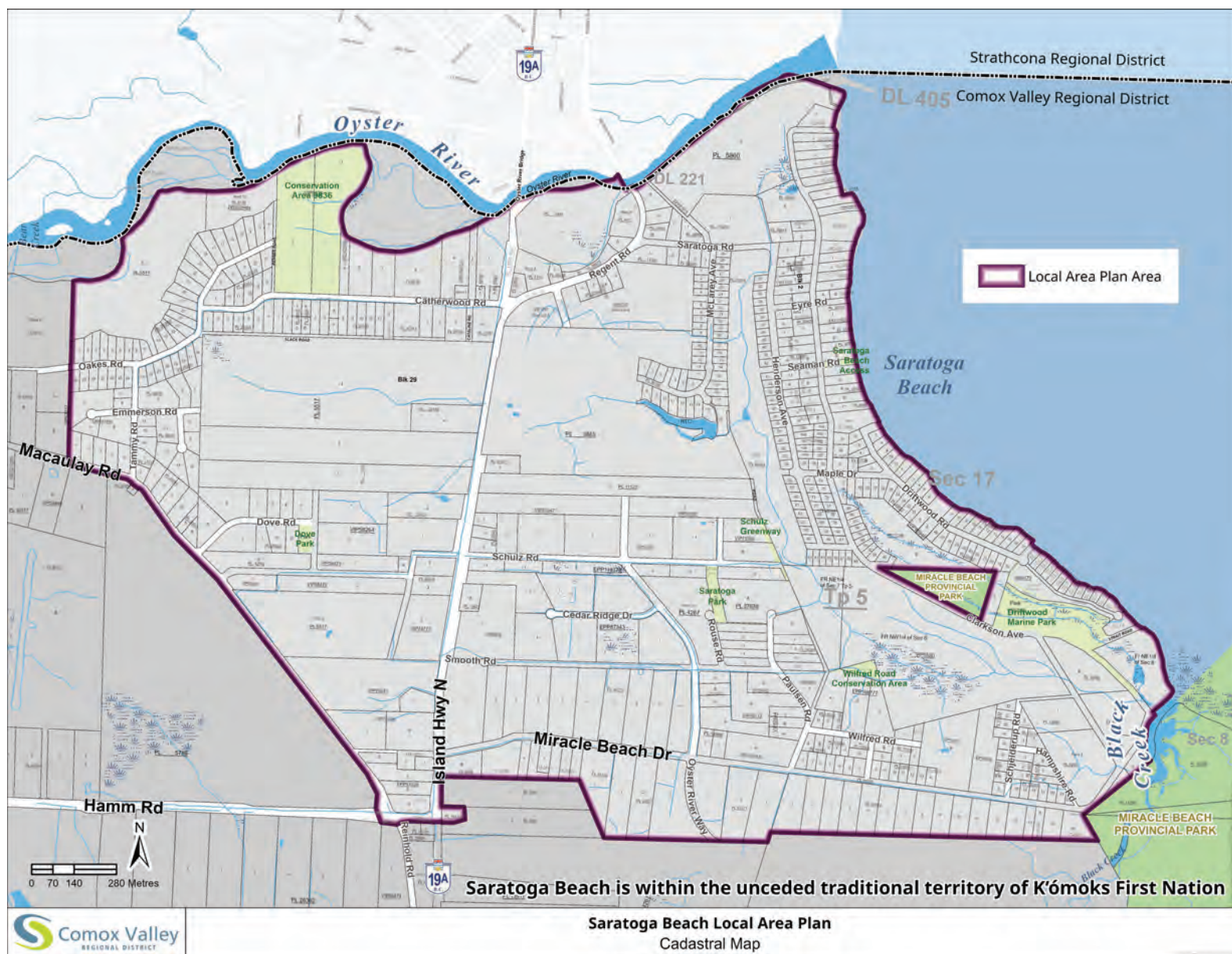
Land that remains in active use for farming, aquaculture, resource use, or other productive rural functions and should not be undermined by incompatible nearby development. This is consistent with RGS language that treats rural and resource areas as working landscapes whose primary functions should remain viable.



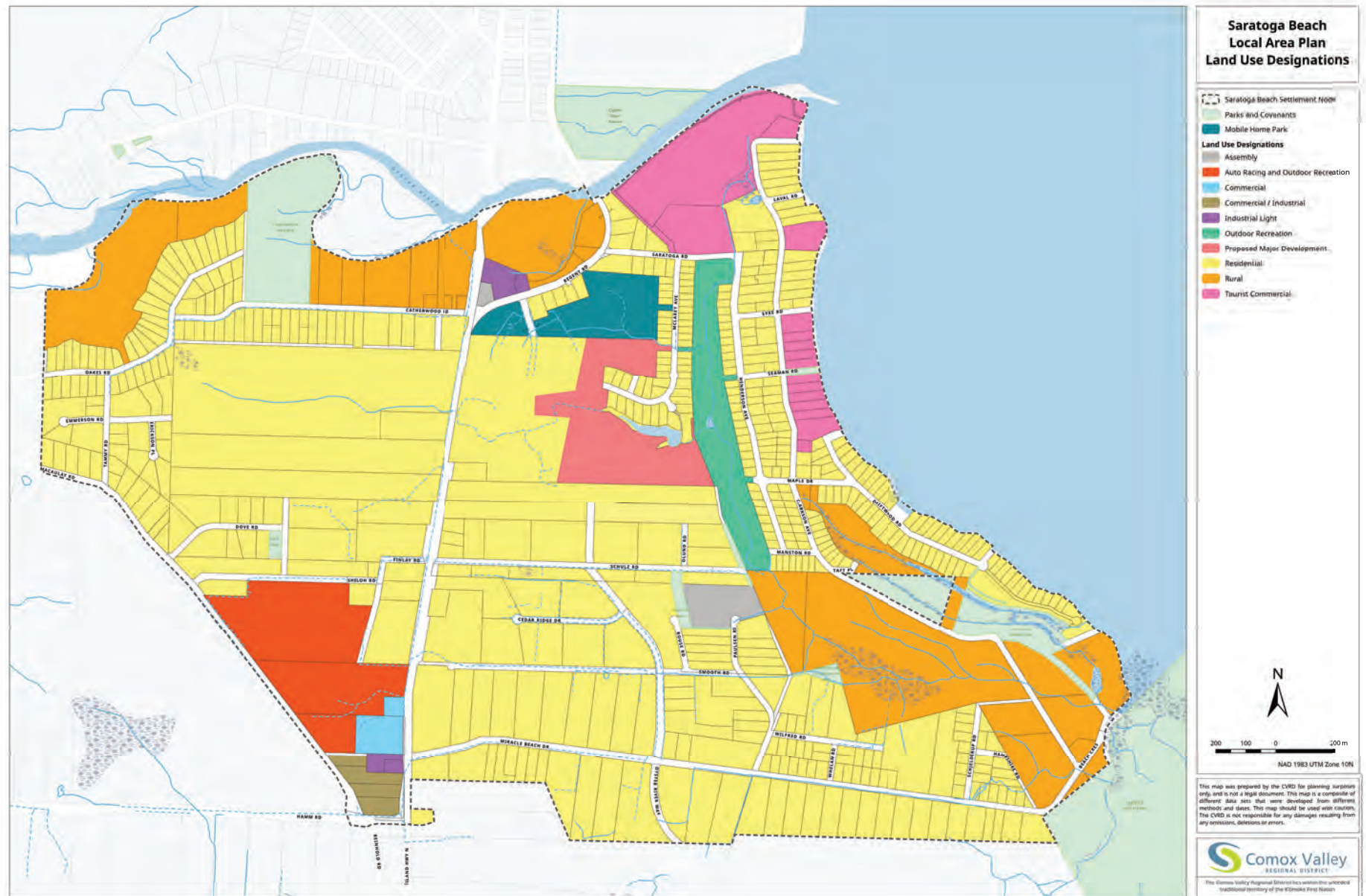
SECTION 14

Maps

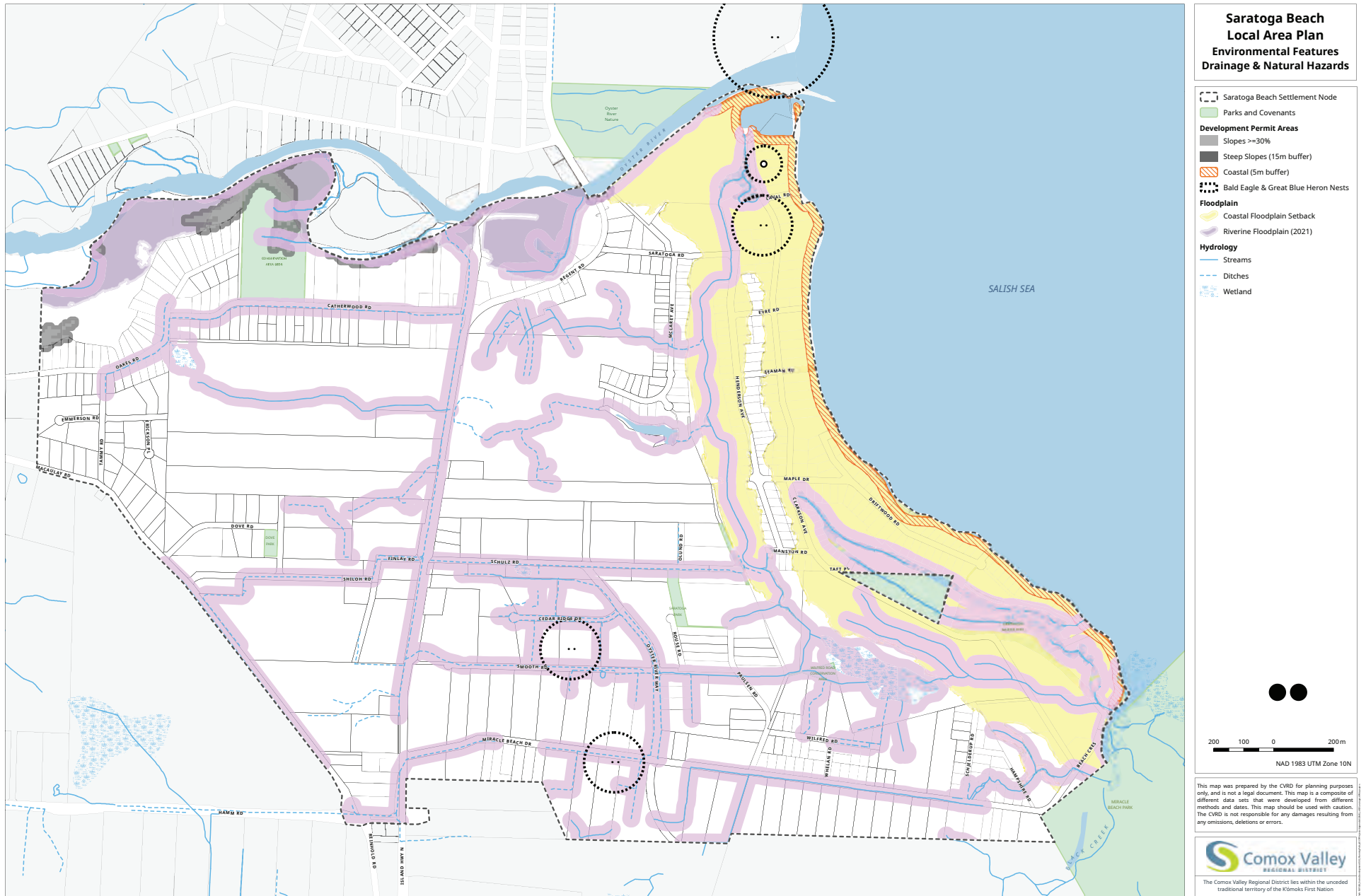
14.1 Planning Area and Regional Context



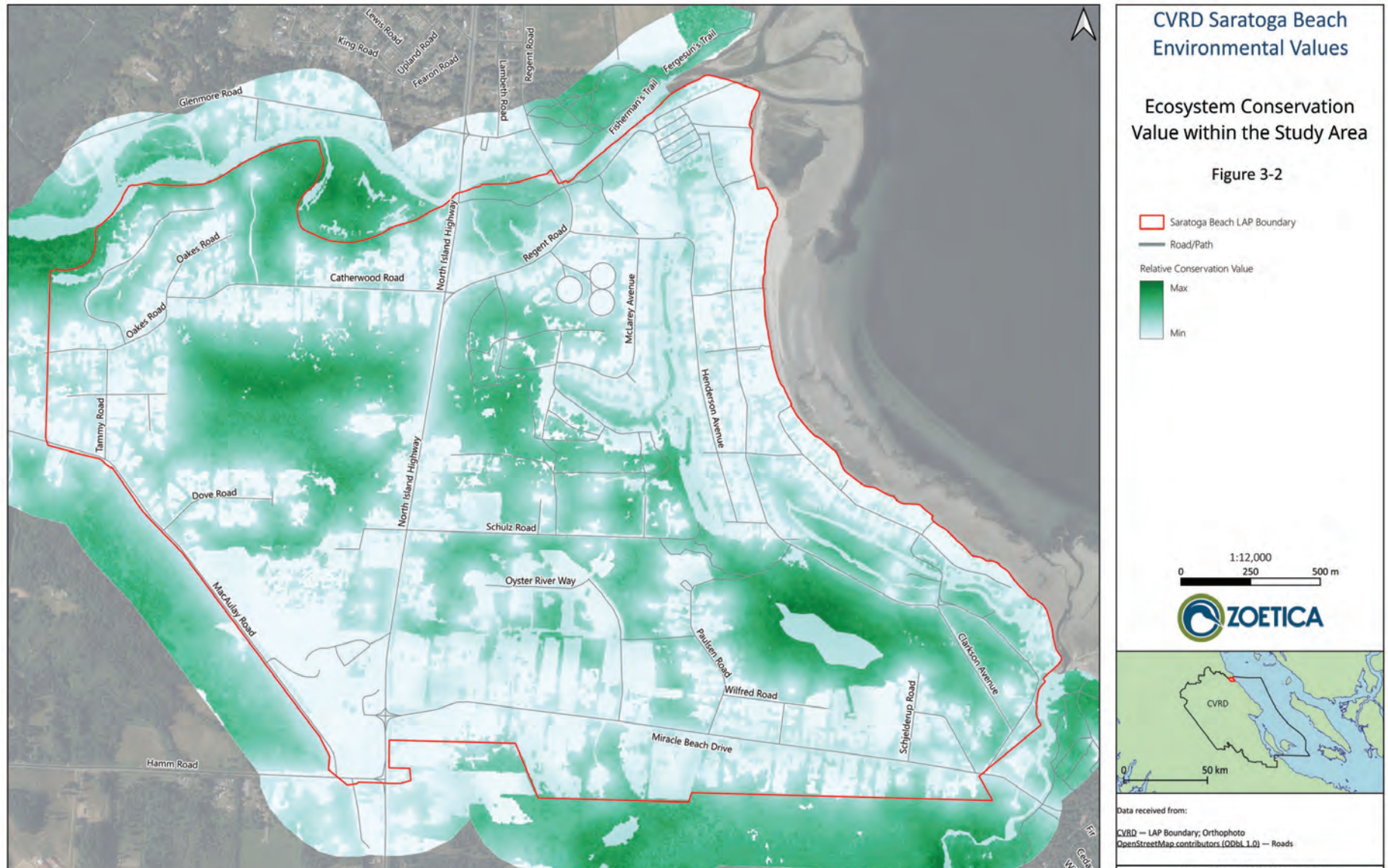
14.2 Local Area Plan Land Use Designations



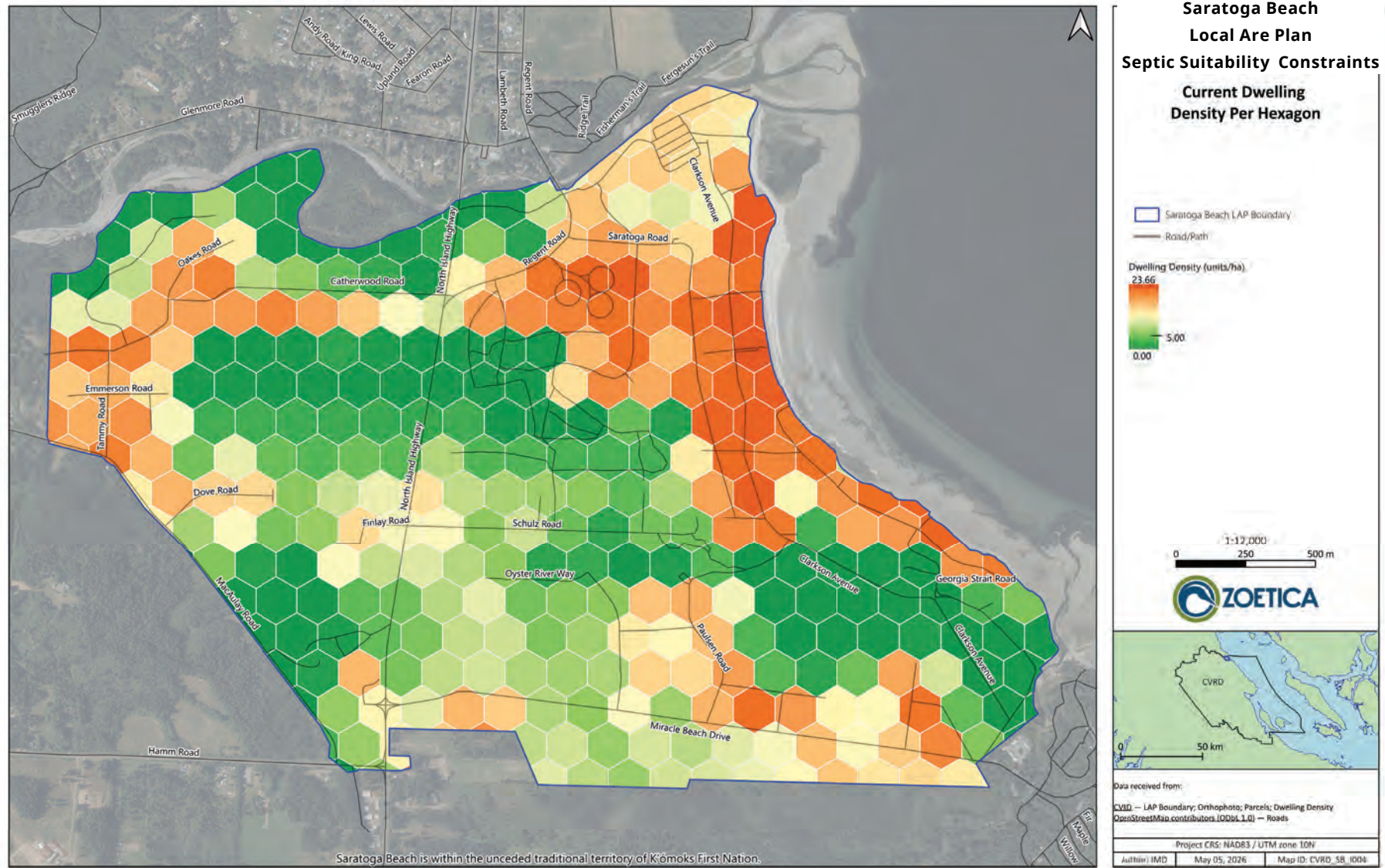
14.3 Environmental Features, Drainage, and Natural Hazards



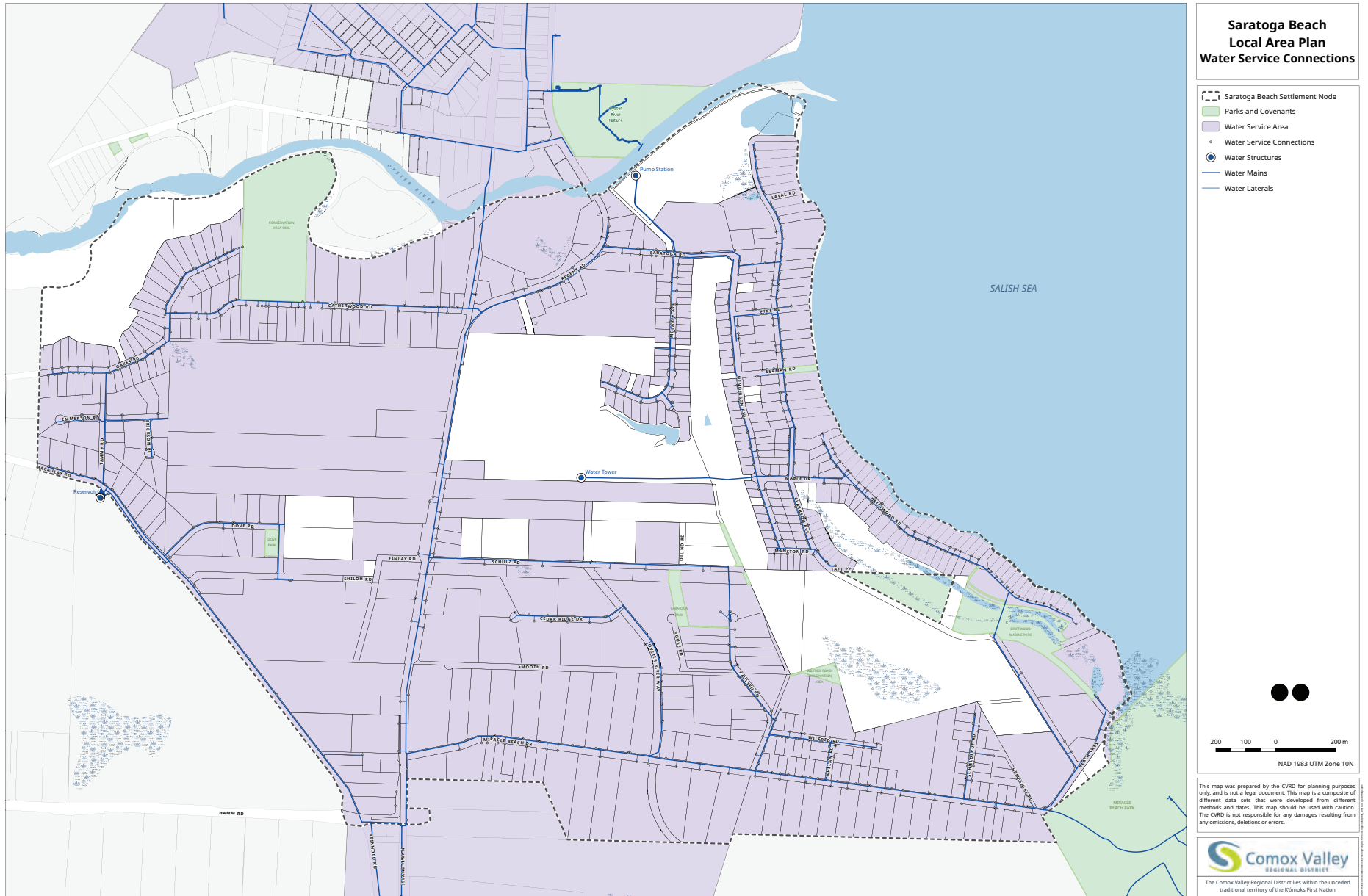
14.4 Ecosystem Classification



14.5 Servicing Considerations



14.5 Servicing Considerations



14.6 Transportation, Access, and Public Facilities



14.7 Sand and Gravel Resource Statement

No known sand and gravel deposits suitable for future extraction are identified within the Saratoga Beach plan area based on available CVRD mapping. If future information identifies suitable deposits, they should be considered through a future OCP review or amendment.

Appendix

Appendix A: Who Does What?

CVRD	Provincial Ministries and Agencies	Federal Departments and Agencies
• Land use planning and development • Regional parks, including washrooms on CVRD park land and Seaman Road facilities • Bylaw enforcement on private properties and regional parks • Black Creek/Oyster Bay Water Local Service Area (with the Strathcona Regional District (SRD)) • Emergency planning through Comox Valley Emergency Management • Oyster River Fire Rescue	Ministry of Transportation and Transit • Public roads (roadside ditches, road shoulders, culverts, parking) • Drainage from roads • Snow removal • Highway crossings • Active transportation in road rights-of-way • With RCMP: Speeding, traffic safety, beach-area roadside parking	Fisheries and Oceans Canada • Fish and fish habitat, • Fisheries • Aquaculture
		Transport Canada • Marine navigation and navigation protection
	Island Health / Ministry of Health • On-site sewage, and • Private sewage systems	
	Agricultural Land Commission • ALR lands adjacent to the plan area	
	Ministry of Environment and Parks • Contamination sites • Environmental protection • Miracle Beach Provincial Park outside of the LAP area	
	Ministry of Forests, Archaeology Branch • Archaeological site protection • Heritage Conservation Act permits	