



BOARD STRATEGIC PLAN 2010-2012

Integrated Solutions for a Sustainable Future

I N T E G R A T E D S T R A T E G I C P R I O R I T I E S



REGIONAL DISTRICT OF NANAIMO BOARD STRATEGIC PLAN: INTEGRATED SOLUTIONS FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Message from the Chair | |
| Introduction | 1 |
| Context: The Regional District | 3 |
| Trends: Accelerating Change | 4 |
| Board Values | 7 |
| Mission | 8 |
| Vision | 9 |
| Sustainability: | 10 |
| Turning Ideas Into Action | 10 |
| Success Stories | 11 |
| Strategic Priorities and Action Areas | 12 |
| Strategic Priorities: | 13 |
| Climate and Energy | 13 |
| Watershed Health | 13 |
| Economic Resilience | 14 |
| Monitoring and Adaptation | 14 |
| Action Areas: | 15 |
| The Regional Federation | 15 |
| Sustainable Communities | 17 |
| Transportation and Solid Waste | 20 |
| Regional and Community Utilities | 24 |
| Recreation and Parks | 26 |
| Conclusion | 28 |



Chairperson's Message

On behalf of the Regional District of Nanaimo Board of Directors, I am proud to present our 2010-2012 Strategic Plan: *Integrated Solutions for a Sustainable Future*. This plan lays a strong foundation for the Board, providing direction for the current term of office while maintaining a long term perspective for the region. Through collaborative decision making, and by taking decisive action, we will take major steps toward realizing our vision for a sustainable future, always guided by the interests of the residents we represent.

Joe Stanhope, Chair of the RDN Board

REGIONAL DISTRICT OF NANAIMO BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2009-2011

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Director, Electoral Area A

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INTRODUCTION

As we enter an era driven by a growing sense of urgency to respond to accelerating change, the 2010–2012 Strategic Plan reflects the need for active, collaborative problem solving in order to effectively address complex challenges that weave together environmental, social and economic issues.

With the Board's desire to show vision, leadership and the will to take action, a key feature of this Strategic Plan is its renewed emphasis on implementation – doing the work now to build the resilience needed to thrive over the long term. Capturing this emphasis on action, the title for the 2010–2012 Strategic Plan is *Integrated Solutions for a Sustainable Future*.

By this title, it is clear that sustainability remains at the core of the Board's decision making. In embracing the concept of sustainability early, the RDN helped shape the understanding that sustainability is about integrating human and natural systems in mutually supportive ways. Now, in emphasizing implementation, this Plan strives to push this understanding of sustainability from the conceptual to the concrete, leading a transition toward applied sustainability, where actions speak louder than words.

The purpose of this Strategic Plan is to express the vision and set the priorities for the Regional District of Nanaimo Board of Directors for the current term of office from 2009–2011. The plan also looks beyond the current term, setting the course for a long-term journey toward a sustainable future.

The Board's vision proceeds from the belief that the RDN is an extraordinary place to live, with diverse communities situated in an inspiring natural setting, endowed with a wealth of opportunities to build a strong, creative and thriving local economy. By this good fortune, our potential is limitless.

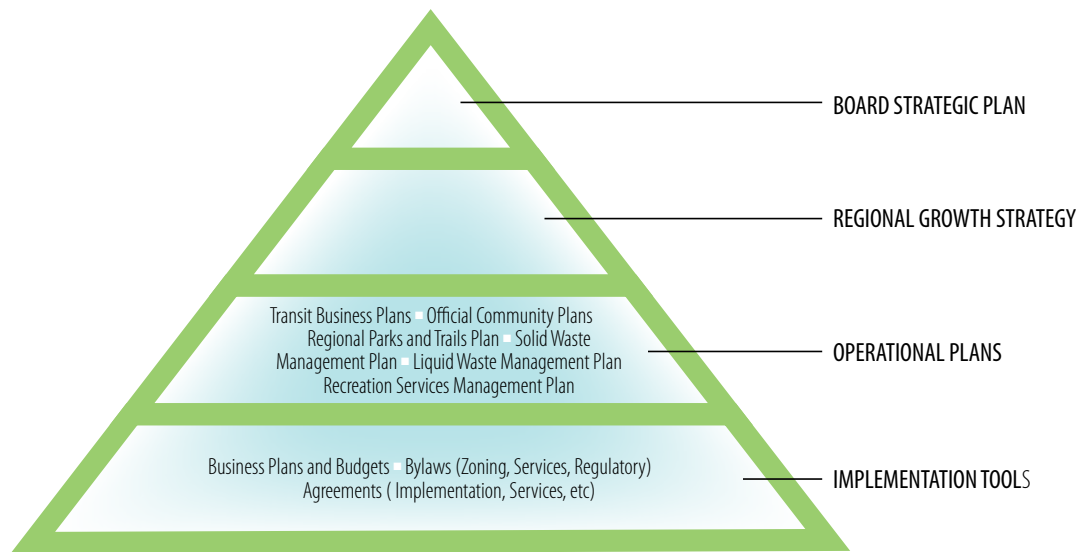
To link decision-making to the Board's vision, this Strategic Plan articulates the core values of the RDN Board, which balance the desire to build a more sustainable region with the responsibility to represent residents fairly and use tax dollars judiciously. These values serve as the foundation for addressing the practical matters that make up the day to day business of Regional governance.

The strategic priorities and action areas described in this Plan are a reflection of the RDN Board's mission, which outlines the obligations of the RDN government to represent the interests of Regional constituents fairly, honestly and openly; to promote the well-being of all of the residents of the Region; and to fulfill the commitment to provide necessary services in an equitable and efficient manner. The strategic priorities are indicative of the issues that are particularly important for the organization to address as a whole, while the action areas outline the specific activities to be undertaken in the immediate term by each department.

As a whole, the Board Strategic plan is the highest level plan for the RDN, giving overall direction for the Regional District during the current term of office. In this way, the Strategic Plan influences the Regional Growth Strategy, which in turn informs the full spectrum of operational plans, such as official community plans, liquid waste and solid waste management plans; and implementation tools such as budgets and bylaws.



Embedding an integrated, active approach to sustainability into the Board Strategic Plan ensures that this approach flows through all aspects of RDN work. As such, this strategic plan also operates as the framework for the RDN's comprehensive approach to sustainability.



Comprehensive Approach to Sustainability

CONTEXT: THE REGIONAL DISTRICT

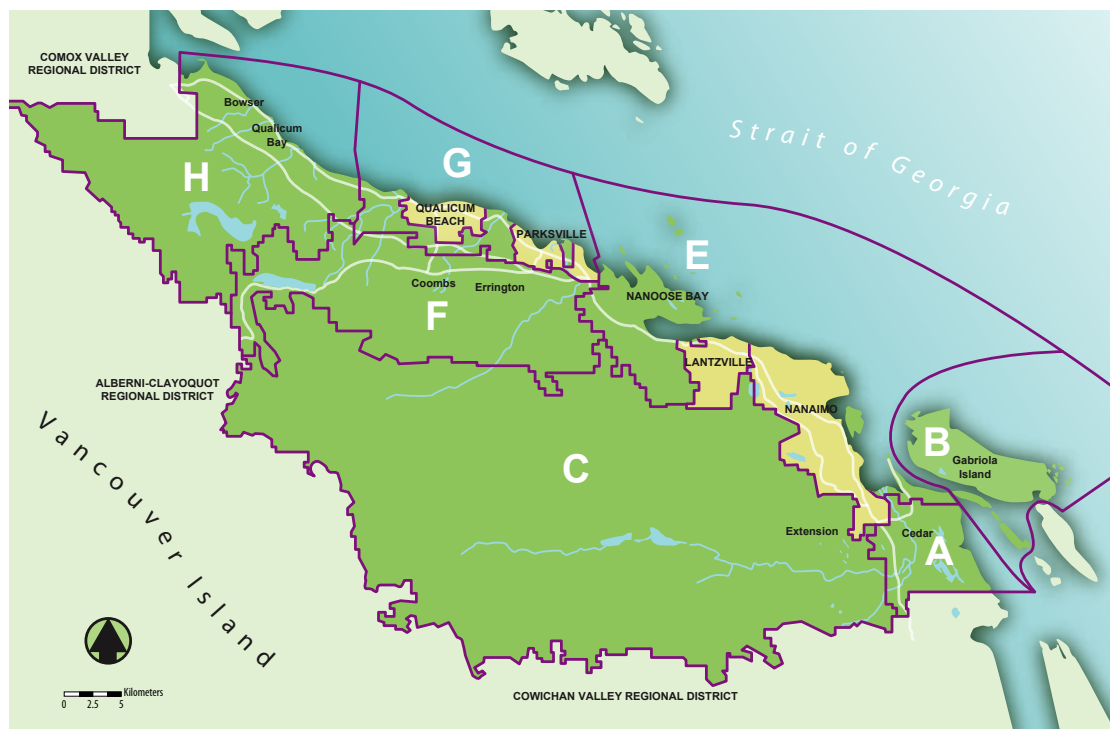
The Regional District of Nanaimo is a regional federation of four municipalities and seven rural electoral areas.

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

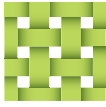
The electoral areas in the Regional District are:

- A: Cedar, South Wellington, Cassidy
- B: Gabriola, Decourcy, Mudge Islands
- C: Extension, Nanaimo Lakes, East Wellington, Pleasant Valley
- E: Nanoose Bay
- F: Coombs, Hilliers, Errington
- G: French Creek, San Pareil, Little Qualicum
- H: Bowser, Qualicum Bay

Six Indian Reserves are also located within the Region: Nanaimo 1, 2, 3 and 4 (Snuneymuxw First Nation), Nanoose (Nanoose First Nation), and Qualicum (Qualicum First Nation).



- RDN Electoral Areas
- Municipalities within the RDN
- Other Regions



TRENDS: ACCELERATING CHANGE

Trends

Global, national, provincial, and local trends and issues continue to challenge the region in the twenty-first century, and the Regional District is ready to face these challenges. Increasingly, emphasis will be on implementing necessary actions, adapting to inevitable change and most importantly, cultivating the collective will to face these challenges together.

Global Trends

The world is witnessing dramatic ecological and economic shifts, both with major implications for our social systems. Those most knowledgeable about climate and the environment are unanimous that major change is underway, and that the pace of global climate and environmental change is accelerating. There is also wide agreement that the underlying cause of this change is connected to how we use energy and the resulting greenhouse gas emissions; how we use the land; and how we consume natural resources. It is clear that it is in our best interest to take the action necessary to minimize the effects of climate change and halt the degradation of environmental systems, but it is also clear that significant change is already inevitable. As a result, increased attention must be paid to adapting to change by building healthy, resilient communities.

Economically, 2008 and 2009 saw a series of systemic failures that have precipitated a global recession. While the current economic crisis appears to be easing, it is clear that our global economic system has vulnerabilities that generate instability and unpredictability at all scales. Good governance at a local level will moderate this unpredictability by fostering local economic opportunities that strengthen self-sufficiency, build a community of skilled citizens, and capitalize on the opportunity to lead a transition toward a greener, more efficient economy.

National Trends

Reflecting global environmental and economic trends, Canada is taking action to reduce emissions by working in unison with the United States to develop a cap-and-trade emissions market while also working to lift the economy out recession by investing in major infrastructure projects.

With a strong vision for a sustainable future, and an understanding of how to get there, the RDN can capitalize on these opportunities, focusing on strategic investments targeted at enhancing community sustainability.

Given the magnitude of the challenges we face, it will be essential to tackle them immediately, head on, together. That being the case, the Regional District of Nanaimo Board will strive to be a force for consensus, considering diverse viewpoints objectively with the aim of solving problems collaboratively.

Provincial Trends

Since 2007, the Province of British Columbia has positioned itself as a leader in confronting climate change, targeting a 33 per cent reduction in emissions below 2007 levels by 2020, creating a carbon tax on fossil fuels, and establishing the Climate Action Charter to encourage local governments to join their efforts to reduce emissions.

By signing the Climate Action Charter, the Regional District of Nanaimo has committed to achieve carbon neutral operations by 2012, a date that closely corresponds to the Board's current term of office. In addition, the Province has legislated that targets, policies and actions relating to greenhouse gas reductions must be included in Official Community Plans and Regional Growth Strategies by May, 2010 and May, 2011 respectively.

Central to the Province's drive to reduce GHG emissions is the need to measure progress toward the reduction targets that are set, and report on that progress. Completing this work accurately, effectively and openly adds an entirely new dimension of work to be undertaken by local governments, however doing so is anticipated to reap environmental as well as financial benefits.

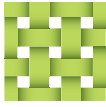
Another provincial trend that is at the forefront of the minds of many residents is the deterioration of community-scale food systems in British Columbia. In response to this trend, the Regional District of Nanaimo has the opportunity to take steps to strengthen the agricultural economy and promote access to healthy, locally produced food.

Local Trends

As global, national and provincial trends continue to focus attention on climate change, the RDN is in a strong position to take a strategic approach to energy, gradually reducing community reliance on fossil fuels and automobiles; and promoting green infrastructure, alternative fuels, conservation, renewable energy, and more active modes of transportation. Pursuing these opportunities will lessen our impact on the environment, enhance community health, and present unparalleled opportunities to entrepreneurs and forward-thinking businesses.

One trend of particular importance to the RDN relates to the region's demographic profile. All jurisdictions in the RDN exceed the median age for the Province, while some have among the eldest populations in the Province. This trend is exacerbated by the fact that, due to its climate, landscape and amenities, mid-Vancouver Island is a highly attractive area to retirees. This trend will exert increasing pressure on our health care system over the foreseeable future, and will demand creative solutions that enable ageing in place and ensure housing affordability.

Another significant local trend relates to forestry companies considering real estate development as a way to generate financial returns in an otherwise hard-hit sector. With large amounts of land at their disposal, this has the potential to affect regional approaches to watershed protection as well as growth management and development. Nevertheless, the Regional District of Nanaimo will maintain its commitment to implement best practices for managing growth and development.



Because of its regional perspective and jurisdiction, the RDN has a strong ability to bring together many stakeholders, build strong visions and face these key challenges, finding a balance between environmental, social and economic objectives in the region, to the benefit of all.

Local Environmental, Social & Economic Trends

| Environmental Trends | Social Trends | Economic Trends |
|--|--|---|
| <p>Increasing demands for water & water supply protection</p> <p>Increasing threats to existing water supply sources</p> <p>Increasing concerns about sewage disposal (septic system performance, wastewater treatment plant capacity)</p> <p>Increasing demands for environmental protection</p> <p>Increasing demands to acquire environmentally significant properties for parkland</p> <p>Rising emissions and diminishing air quality</p> <p>Increasing demands for public transit</p> <p>Increasing need to reduce solid waste entering landfill</p> | <p>Steadily growing population</p> <p>Increasing proportion of older residents</p> <p>Rising cost of housing</p> <p>Migration of urbanites with high service expectations to rural areas of region</p> <p>Increasing demand for community facilities & limited funding to provide them</p> <p>Increased desire for access to services and jobs within local neighbourhoods</p> | <p>Global economic uncertainty</p> <p>Increasing construction costs</p> <p>Continued decline of forestry & fishing industries on the island</p> <p>Increasing interest in tourism, particularly ecological and cultural based tourism</p> <p>Increasing focus on the development of tourism infrastructure (e.g. convention centre, downtown development)</p> <p>Increasing cost of energy</p> <p>Increasing urgency to replace ageing infrastructure</p> |
|  |  |  |

BOARD VALUES

Each member of the Board has taken on the responsibility to represent their respective communities. In pursuit of this civic duty, each Director faces challenging decisions on a daily basis. To ensure a consistent, objective approach to decision-making, the Board has collectively affirmed a set of core values that seeks to balance the immediate, practical matters that make up the business of regional governance with the long-term vision to build a more sustainable region. These values are elaborated here:

- **Be Fiscally Responsible**

The Board will use tax dollars prudently, supporting services that benefit residents of the region, and maintain transparency in financial reporting.

- **Be Fair And Equitable**

Appropriate service levels should be available to residents, and the costs for those services should be shared as fairly as possible among those who benefit.

- **Represent The Interests Of The Region**

To represent the region as a whole, the Board seeks objectivity and consensus in decision making, and approaches other levels of government as a united body.

- **Be Transparent And Accountable**

The RDN Board is committed to openness and clarity about decisions, and Board members will be approachable by the public.

- **Ensure Excellent Communication**

The Board will involve residents in the decision-making process, facilitating public engagement, listening to stakeholders, and considering diverse viewpoints.

- **Be Responsive**

The Board will respond to the needs of the region in a timely manner, prioritizing projects and activities that advance residents' well being.

- **Work Effectively As A Team**

To achieve a common vision, the Board will cooperate and collaborate across jurisdictions, and maintain an open dialogue in decision-making.

- **Focus On Solutions**

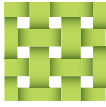
The Board will balance innovation and ingenuity with prudence, practicality and efficiency in pursuing a productive approach to problem solving.

- **Have Vision And Courage**

Moving into an increasingly unpredictable future will require courage to take the bold actions that will realize the Board's vision for a sustainable region.

- **Anticipate And Act**

As a proactive organization, the RDN will monitor regional trends, access the best information available, and aim to prevent problems before they arise.



MISSION

The mission of the Regional District of Nanaimo is to enhance the environmental, social and economic well-being of the residents and communities we serve and represent by providing those services that are best delivered in a cooperative, region-wide basis; by providing a range of community services in unincorporated electoral areas; and by acting as the Local Government for the Region's electoral areas.

In fulfilling this mission, the Regional District of Nanaimo plays two major roles:

1. To facilitate the development of collaborative strategies and plans to guide the provision of services, including, but not limited to the:
 - Regional Growth Strategy.
 - Official Community Plans.
 - Solid Waste Management Plan.
 - Liquid Waste Management Plan.
 - Drinking Water/ Watershed Protection Plan.
 - Community and Corporate Energy and Emissions Plans.
 - Regional Parks, Trails and Recreation Planning.
 - Transit Business Plan.
 - Emergency Preparedness Plan.

2. To deliver a wide range of services at the community, sub-regional and regional levels to support the implementation of these plans, including, but not limited to:
 - Creating, maintaining, and enforcing regulations for land use and buildings.
 - Providing solid waste collection and disposal services.
 - Operating wastewater collection and treatment facilities.
 - Operating drinking water, stormwater and streetlight utilities.
 - Establishing and maintaining regional and community parks and trails.
 - Operating recreational facilities.
 - Developing and delivering recreational and cultural programs.
 - Delivering public transit service.
 - Providing fire and emergency services.
 - Exploring and pursuing energy efficiency solutions and where appropriate, alternative and innovative energy supply systems within the region.
 - Working with stakeholders to address regional housing affordability.
 - Raising public awareness about the Regional District's activities and how they help achieve the Regional District's strategies and plans.
 - Acquiring, managing, developing and maintaining regional park land and electoral area community park land.

VISION

In the year 2030, the Regional District of Nanaimo is a socially, economically, and environmentally healthy region, where residents meet their needs without compromising the ability of future residents to do the same.

Our Environment

Residents have a safe, sufficient supply of drinking water. Important ecosystems and ecological features are protected, healthy, and productive. Natural resources in the region are conserved, and renewable resources continue to be available. The air is clean and safe to breathe. Greenhouse gas emission levels have stabilized and are beginning to decrease. Residents' energy requirements are reduced, and energy is obtained in ways that minimize negative impacts on the environment. Land and resources are efficiently used, and the negative impacts of land use and development are minimized.

Our Society

Residents in the region are healthy, and healthcare services and facilities are available when needed. Residents have education and training that qualifies them for employment in the region. Poverty in the region is minimized, and residents can meet their basic needs. Housing is affordable, and a variety of different types and sizes of housing are available to accommodate the current and future needs of residents. The region is a safe place to live, and residents care for and respect each other. There are a wide variety of opportunities for people to interact with each other and nature, and historical attributes that are important to the region are acknowledged, celebrated and preserved.

Our Economy

Residents in the region are employed in a wide variety of interesting and rewarding occupations. Our downtowns are vibrant places, and there is a wide variety of different sizes and types of businesses in the region. The economy of the region is healthy and continues to diversify and grow. Businesses in the region are environmentally responsible, and there are systems in place to favour these businesses. It is economically viable to produce goods and services in the region that are environmentally friendly, and residents favour these goods and services over those made available from outside the region.



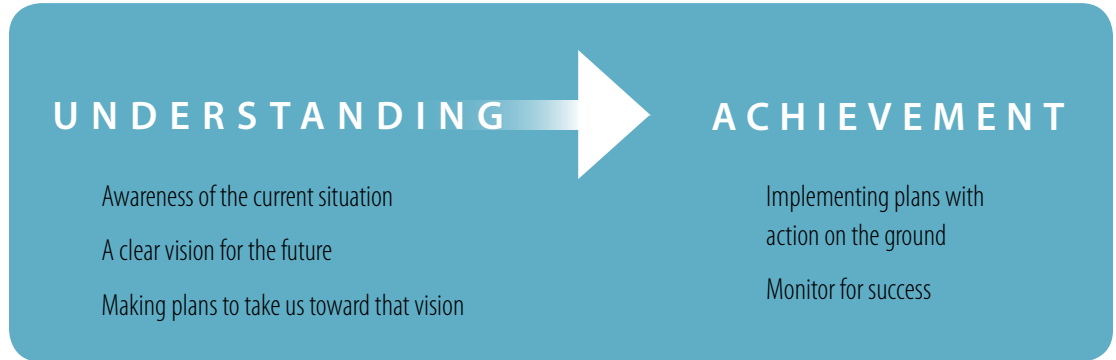
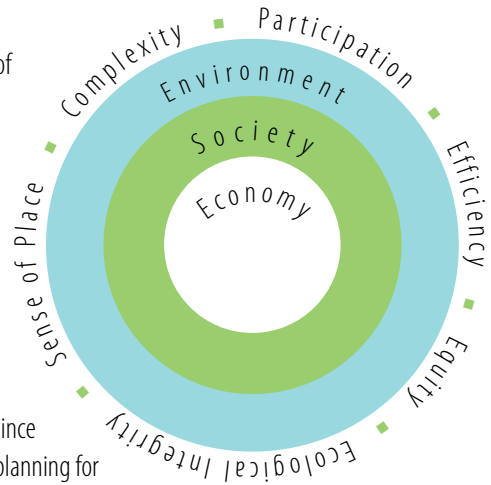
SUSTAINABILITY: TURNING IDEAS INTO ACTION

The Regional District of Nanaimo has demonstrated a keen understanding of the concept of sustainability, namely that the environment, society and the economy are deeply interrelated, nested systems; with the economy operating within our society, and both bounded by the limits set by the natural environment. Therefore, for these systems to thrive over time, the economic and social lives of people must be integrated into the environment in ways that maintain or enhance the environment rather than degrade or destroy it.

It is this understanding that lies at the foundation of the RDN’s vision for a sustainable future, informing the plans and policies developed at the RDN since 2002; and enabling the RDN to occupy a position of leadership in terms of planning for a sustainable future.

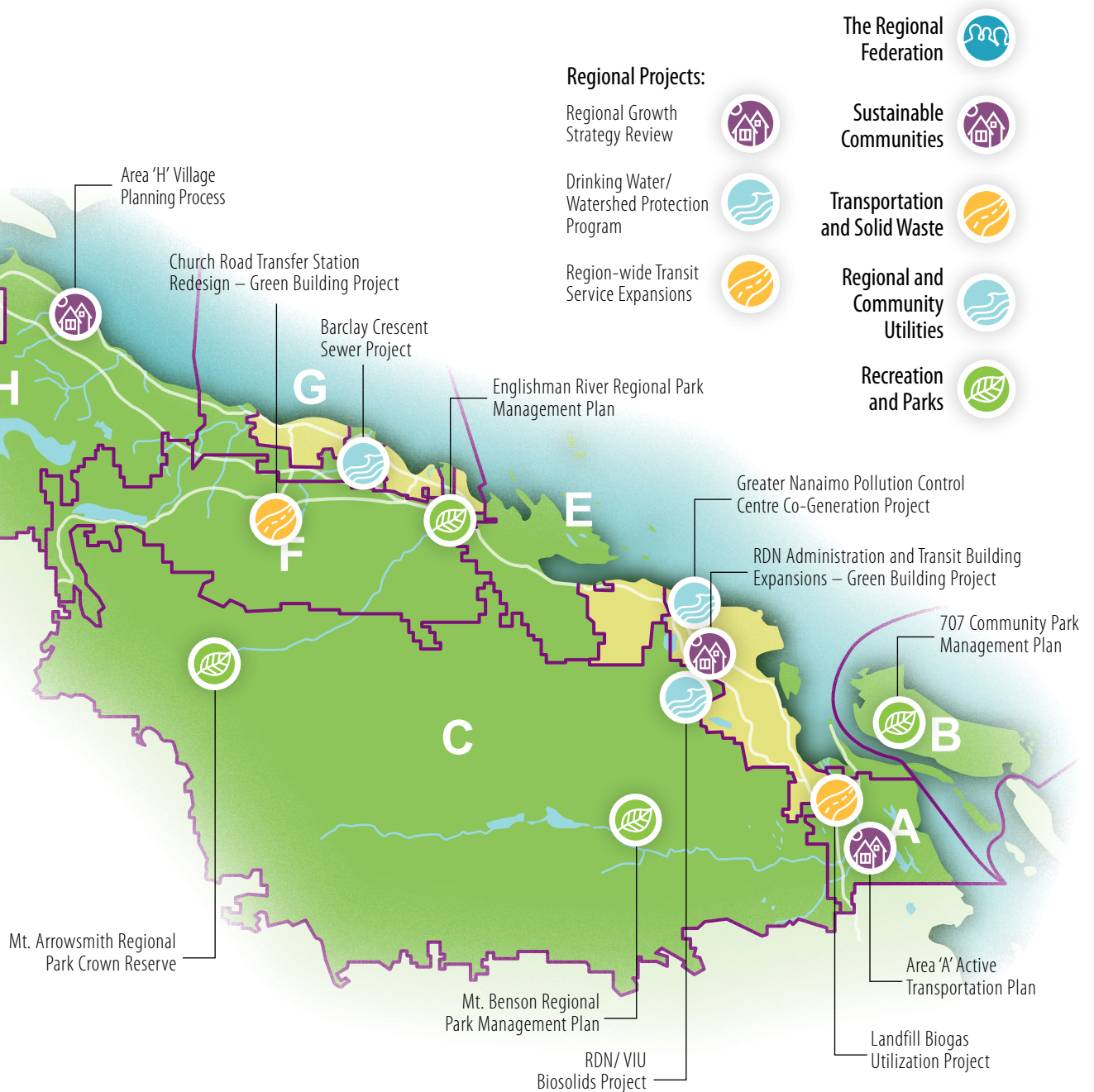
In recent years, other jurisdictions have followed the RDN’s lead, embracing this understanding, ensuring that the first generation of sustainability –focusing on awareness, vision and planning - has become the conventional way of thinking.

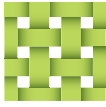
Now, as other jurisdictions have caught up, the opportunity has arisen for the RDN to step forward and demonstrate leadership once again, shaping the second generation of sustainability, where understanding evolves into achieving sustainability as plans are implemented, and action occurs on the ground.



SUSTAINABILITY: SUCCESS STORIES

While this Strategic Plan places strong emphasis on an integrated approach to problem solving with particular focus on implementation, this does not mean that implementation has not been happening. In fact the RDN has made significant progress in recent years. The map below highlights projects across the region that are worthy of special mention for the benefits they provide to residents, the demonstration of leadership in planning, and for their innovation. These are some projects that indicate momentum is building in the RDN, and that the Board is making decisions guided by its vision for a sustainable future.





STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND ACTION AREAS

These Strategic Priorities and Action Areas identify the key areas of focus for the Board's current term of office, emphasizing the desire to take a comprehensive, integrated approach to sustainability, while recognizing the distinct roles and responsibilities for each department of the RDN.

The Strategic Priorities refer to cross-cutting issues of importance that touch on all aspects of RDN work. Rather than being the responsibility of one department, the strategic priorities are addressed horizontally, by all RDN departments across the organization.

The Action Areas reflect the traditional structures within the RDN organization, with different departments charged with specific roles, focused on clearly defined deliverables.

Strategic Priorities

- Climate and Energy
- Watershed Health
- Economic Resilience
- Monitoring and Adaptation

Action Areas

-  The Regional Federation
-  Sustainable Communities
-  Transportation and Solid Waste
-  Regional and Community Utilities
-  Recreation and Parks

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Climate And Energy

Greenhouse gases will continue to increase in the atmosphere, even after emissions have been brought under control. At the same time, dwindling sources of conventional energy will eventually constrain supply, causing prices to rise. The resulting environmental changes and potential economic instability present significant challenges. However, with these challenges come opportunities, particularly as global investment in alternative energy and carbon management grows. As decision-makers responsible for administering regional management of solid waste and wastewater and drinking water, parkland, land use, and transportation services, the RDN Board has an enormous role to play in transitioning the region toward more sustainable energy systems.

Objectives

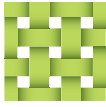
- To take a strategic approach to energy, emissions and climate change integrated across the Regional District as a whole.
- To work with each local government and electoral area to reduce emissions and meet the provincial and global targets for emission reduction.
- To support energy efficiency measures within the RDN organization that will lead to carbon neutral operations, and to assist member municipalities in their efforts to do the same.
- To support energy efficiency measures that reduce consumption as well as emissions in the community at large.
- To explore, invest in and develop innovative, clean and renewable energy supplies throughout the region.

Watershed Health

Healthy watersheds comprised of functioning forests and diverse ecosystems provide vital support systems for our society. Being proactive about protecting watershed health requires a coordinated approach to land use planning and development, infrastructure development, and park and protected areas planning that prioritizes the health of forests, ecosystems and watersheds. Equally important are communication and education to raise awareness of the importance of watersheds.

Objectives

- To protect the ecological health of the region's forests and to support their use as a sustainable resource.
- To protect and enhance the biodiversity and overall health of the region's ecosystem. To support improvements in the efficient use of water.
- To direct the responsible management of wastewater, implementing innovative solutions where appropriate.



Economic Resilience

To foster economic resilience, the RDN will seek out opportunities to advance sustainable approaches to the traditional sectors that built the regional economy, notably resource development and agriculture, while strengthening tourism and other emerging sectors.

In addition, whenever possible, the RDN will build local capacity to capitalize on the transition to a greener, more efficient economy by engaging local people in projects that demand creative and innovative approaches to planning, design and development.

Objectives

- To support the development of an economy that meets the needs of a diverse population at different stages of life.
- To build on the existing competitive advantages of the region to increase the stability of the regional economy.
- To strive for low per capita costs of supplying public facilities and programs.
- To strengthen the local agricultural economy so that local food systems are productive and viable, and contribute to the cultural vitality of the region.
- To promote high quality housing that is affordable to residents.
- To build local expertise in green building and renewable energy technologies, materials and processes.

Monitoring and Adaptation

To verify the effectiveness of project implementation, and in response to the need to demonstrate progress in moving toward a more sustainable future, it will be increasingly important to establish processes for monitoring the results of activities undertaken by the RDN. The natural corollary to monitoring is the need for adaptability: changing tack when it is clear that anticipated results are not occurring, or expanding work that shows promising results. Together, monitoring and adaptation ensures that decision-making occurs with the best information available and is based on an understanding of implications for established priorities.

Objectives

- To set disciplined targets for our work, and to monitor and report on our progress in meeting those targets.
- To generate awareness about the good work being done by the RDN, and encourage other jurisdictions to build on our successes.
- To ensure that resources are dedicated to those efforts that offer the greatest promise in bringing together human development and environmental systems in mutually supportive ways.

ACTION AREAS



The Regional Federation

Context

A Cooperative Federation: The RDN is a “federation” of municipalities and electoral areas that benefit from working together on key issues and on service provision.

Regional Perspective: In many ways, the sustainability and performance of the region is dependent on working together and taking a regional perspective on issues.

Regional Lifestyle: The RDN is comprised of 4 municipalities and 7 electoral areas. The facilities in each jurisdiction are accessible to residents across the region.

Collaboration: A growing commitment to collaboration results in increasingly complex challenges as a wide diversity of expectations and needs must be accommodated within the federation.

Incorporation: As they grow, some electoral areas may find it beneficial to incorporate and take on their own services rather than rely on the RDN to provide them. This process must be done objectively, with a full understanding of the costs and benefits involved.

Current Plans and Initiatives

The RDN currently has a number of plans and initiatives in place in this area including:

- **Regional service agreements (RSA)** – RSAs have been established to provide cost sharing for public amenities that are owned and located in one jurisdiction but are accessible to all.
- **Communications** – The RDN uses several communications initiatives to raise awareness about key issues and the activities and programs the RDN offers.
- **Innovation** – Progressive work, including the Drinking Water/Watershed Protection program, corporate and community wide energy planning, and housing affordability studies are being led by the Region.

Strategic Goals and Actions for 2010-2012

The following outlines the strategic goals and actions for the RDN for 2010-2012:

1. To be one of the most cooperative, well-managed and visionary regional districts in the province.

- a) Work together to implement the sustainability-oriented goals and innovative initiatives in the region.
- b) Continue to develop ways for the region’s municipalities, electoral areas and other key stakeholders to work collaboratively.
- c) Promote the importance of leadership in sustainability initiatives.
- d) Continue to foster protocol agreements with the First Nations in the region using the Snuneymuxw First Nation model to involve them productively in landuse and other decisions.

- 2. To strengthen the working relationship between municipalities and electoral areas as regional federation partners, and increase effectiveness through cooperation.**
 - a) Continue to enhance cooperation between municipalities and electoral areas through the regional district model by supporting regional functions and service agreements.
 - b) Acknowledge the diversity within the region in lifestyles, needs, expectations and priorities and work together to find creative ways to achieve goals while respecting the needs of a local area.
 - c) Create venues for meaningful dialogue between municipalities and electoral areas on land-use and planning issues that have mutual implications.
 - d) Continue to foster cooperation between staff at the Regional District and those of the municipalities within the region.
- 3. To enhance the reputation and recognition of the RDN as a valuable and effective level of government in creating and delivering services, as well as conducting research and creating opportunities for dialogue with its residents.**
 - a) Continue to reinforce recognition of the Regional District of Nanaimo in communications.
 - b) Work to increase public awareness and engagement on sustainability issues and the impact of regional district decisions.
 - c) Develop a public consultation strategy to ensure fair and objective input from the full diversity of residents.
 - d) Review current communication initiatives to ensure communication priorities are aligned with this Strategic Plan's purpose and direction.
 - e) Inform our residents and stakeholders about RDN accomplishments and progress toward our goals and objectives.
- 4. To enhance the Board's ability to have open, frank, balanced and objective discussions on complex issues prior to making decisions.**
 - a) Continue to provide opportunities to discuss complex issues and explore the full range of opportunities for solutions that may exist.
 - b) Consider using committees and task forces to confront difficult issues, and to more fully explore options connected to policy and decision-making. Involve experts and the public as necessary in these discussions.
- 5. To achieve increased clarity on future expansion of municipalities and incorporation of electoral areas.**
 - a) Undertake discussions with the electoral areas about the costs, benefits and challenges of incorporation over time.
 - b) Examine the relationship between incorporation and factors such as growing rural village centres, infrastructure expectations, and the population and density thresholds that will support various services.
- 6. To enhance relationships between the RDN and adjacent regional districts, and between the RDN and other orders of government.**
 - a) Review and explore opportunities to facilitate more effective dialogue about matters of mutual interest between the RDN and adjacent regional districts, and between the RDN and other orders of government.



Sustainable Communities

Context

Regional Growth Strategy: The region's Regional Growth Strategy is under review in an updating process, with increased emphasis on sustainability principles. Growth management is widely acknowledged to be one of the most important aspects of building more sustainable communities because of the long-term implications of how communities are structured and developed. This remains one of the most challenging issues in the region.

Density: Increased density is necessary to support infrastructure costs, services, businesses, transit and socially vibrant communities across the region.

Environmental Protection: Protection of the natural environment within and around the communities in the RDN is critical to maintain water supplies, ecosystem integrity and liveability.

Energy and Emissions: To build more sustainable communities, the RDN will aim to improve energy efficiency and reduce emissions across the region.

Industry: Employment and industrial activity are important for economic resilience, however, many residents are concerned about the impacts of industrial development on watersheds and rural areas.

Housing: Affordable housing is becoming an issue in many of the region's communities as a result of volatile construction and energy markets, price pressure in surrounding regions, and changing demographics.

Model Projects: Many communities have discovered the benefits of selecting one or several neighbourhood development projects and working with the development community to make these "model" sustainable community projects.

Green Development: There is growing support for more sustainable development and "green building" policies. As official community plans are reviewed, creative opportunities exist to designate areas for green development.

Building Inspection: Some areas within the region are currently without building inspection requirements. Building inspection assists in maintaining public health and safety, environmental protection, and related goals of sustainability. Opportunities to encourage voluntary inspection could be explored.

Current Plans and Initiatives

The RDN currently has a number of plans and initiatives in place in this area including:

- A revised **Regional Growth Strategy**.
- A **Rural Village Centre Plan** for Area 'H'.
- A new **Official Community Plan** for Area 'A' based on sustainability principles.
- A new **Corporate Carbon Neutral Operations Plan** and **Community Energy and Emissions Plan**.
- The **Green Building Action Plan**.

Strategic Goals and Actions for 2010-2012

1. Finalize and begin implementing the revised Regional Growth Strategy.

- a) Complete the review of the Regional Growth Strategy.
- b) Continue to work with municipalities and electoral areas to incorporate the Regional Growth Strategy vision and principles into official community plans, including recognizing the importance of containing growth effectively.
- c) Explore performance targets as a means of focusing on options for development across the region including the importance of current and future transit connections.

2. Promote sustainable development initiatives and policies throughout the region.

- a) Continue to implement the Green Building Action Plan.
- b) Consider the development of design guidelines to encourage enhanced stewardship of ecosystem health in new developments.
- c) Build on the expanded authorities provided by the Province through Bill 27, Green Statutes Amendment Act (2008) to address affordability, water conservation, energy and emissions reduction through development permit areas and other means.
- d) Encourage neighbourhood development projects within the Growth Containment Boundary to become models for more sustainable, urban village developments.
- e) Develop and implement a program to recognize examples of excellence in sustainable community development.

3. Increase understanding in the public, the media and the development industry of the importance of growth management and sustainable development.

- a) Continue communications initiatives to increase understanding of growth management issues and sustainable community development policies and practices.
- b) Establish a system for monitoring and reporting on sustainability performance across the region.

4. Implement the Corporate Energy and Emissions Plan for the RDN, and achieve carbon neutral operations by 2012.

- a) Investigate the impact of carbon neutrality targets on RDN services, assets and infrastructure, and prepare appropriate plans for adaptation.
- b) Explore interdepartmental opportunities to increase efficiencies, find synergies and reduce the need for offsets.

5. Complete the Community Energy and Emissions Plan.

- a) Engage the public in the development of the Community Energy and Emissions Plan and undertake ongoing communications and public education on the issues of climate change, energy management and air quality.
- b) Identify potential clean and renewable power supply sources, ways to increase overall energy efficiency and ways to reduce air quality, particulates and greenhouse gas emissions.

- c) Look for partnerships and funding from the federal government, BC Hydro, non-profit agencies and others to support the development and implementation of the community energy and climate change plan and associated innovative projects.
- d) Explore opportunities to require larger new developments in electoral areas to generate a portion of their own energy.
- e) Investigate options for the RDN to develop an energy utility to harness alternative energy opportunities in the region.

6. Increase affordable housing and housing choices that support “ageing in place”.

- a) Build on the Regional Housing Affordability Study to develop strategies that promote the development of affordable housing and housing that supports “ageing in place”.
- b) Develop region-wide strategies, incentives and options for increasing density in current and planned neighbourhoods to increase the cost-effectiveness of infrastructure, services and transit.
- c) Explore ways to encourage higher density development on land inside the Growth Containment Boundary.
- d) Ensure future costs of infrastructure are allocated fairly.
- e) Lobby senior governments to provide resources and support for affordable and seniors’ housing.

7. Develop a strategy to implement building inspection across all electoral areas over time.

- a) Develop strategies to encourage residents to support building inspections in areas not currently required to have inspections.

8. Promote approaches to resource and industrial development that minimize negative impacts on communities and watersheds and support sustainable communities.

- a) In consultation with the municipalities, electoral areas, industry, senior governments and other stakeholders, develop strategies to effectively manage the growth, and the impacts of industry on communities, watersheds, and economic development in the region.
- b) Continue to work to preserve forest cover and watershed integrity in large-lot rural areas.

9. Minimize nuisances that negatively impact the quality of life in the region.

- a) Identify noise nuisances in the region and develop a strategy to minimize these impacts.
- b) Consider air quality controls to minimize negative impacts of burning, smoke and odours.



Transportation and Solid Waste

Context

Transportation:

Transit System: The RDN manages the region's transit system in partnership with BC Transit. Public transportation options include conventional transit buses equipped with bike racks and wheelchair / scooter accessible ramps, and handyDART buses for people with disabilities.

Transportation Priority: Transportation planning and design should be structured around pedestrians, cyclists and transit over the automobile, in order to be more efficient, reduce emissions and become more sustainable over time.

The Cost of Energy: Rising fuel costs will contribute to increased demand for transit and non-automobile forms of transportation.

Emissions Reductions: Increasing urgency to take action against climate change has resulted in challenging targets for emissions reductions. Significant shifts in transportation choices and behaviour will be necessary to meet these reduction targets.

Land Use and Transit: The viability and cost-effectiveness of regional transit systems are closely tied to the pattern of land uses and densities of development across the region, particularly the connections between residential areas and areas with high employment or school concentrations.

Solid Waste:

Waste Profile: 35% of material sent to landfills in the region is compostable organics, including over 50% of the residential waste stream and 40% of the commercial / industrial waste stream.

Zero Waste: The RDN has taken many strong steps to reduce waste in the region, including adopting a Zero Waste Plan that aims to increase waste diversion from the current rate of 63% to a target of 75%.

Organics Waste Diversion: The Board has expanded the Organics Diversion Strategy, addressing diversion opportunities for the 35% of the compostable organic material currently sent to landfill.

Waste to Energy: For waste that cannot be diverted, there are growing opportunities to consider this residual waste stream as a resource to be harnessed to meet a portion of the Region's energy needs.

Current Plans and Initiatives

The RDN currently has a number of plans and initiatives in place in this area including:

- A **Transit Business Plan**.
- A **UPASS Program** proposal.
- A **Corporate Fleet Vehicle Replacement** process.
- Expanded role in community planning projects.
- Continuation of the **Solid Waste Management Plan**, and build on the success of the **Zero Waste Program**.
- Expand the development of renewable energy systems that capture fuels from solid waste facilities.

Strategic Goals and Actions for 2010-2012

Transportation

1. Continue to enhance transit service in the RDN in consultation with BC Transit, municipalities and other stakeholders.

- a) Pursue opportunities to increase non-local funding for transit, including strategies to access federal gas-tax transfers.
- b) Improve the accessibility of the bus fleet for people with disabilities.
- c) Continue to promote the U-PASS program at Vancouver Island University.
- d) Continue to promote the PROPASS Program with large employers in the Region.
- e) Explore the feasibility of expanding transit service in rural areas, including identifying population and density thresholds that can support cost-effective transit service.
- f) Encourage BC Transit to increase vehicle fleet efficiency and performance through consideration of new technology, a diversity of vehicle sizes, and the use of clean or renewable fuels.
- g) Continue to purchase fuel efficient vehicles for all departments of the Regional District wherever practical and affordable. Consider the costs of more efficient vehicles against the cost of fuel and emission offsets necessary to meet RDN's commitment to carbon neutral operations by 2012.
- h) Identify transportation options and the level of transit service required to meet emissions reduction goals; link these with the Regional Growth Strategy and land use planning processes to support the required level of transit use.
- i) Increase the comfort and convenience of public transit through enhancements to bus shelters and other transit infrastructure.
- j) Explore opportunities for smaller, flexible neighbourhood-scale shuttle buses as part of the regional fleet.

2. Continue to encourage residents to use transit and non-automobile forms of transportation.

- a) Encourage increased transit ridership by continuously improving route design and timing to increase convenience and efficiency of the transit system.
- b) Address the need for a central transit exchange in downtown Nanaimo.
- c) Where cost effective, continue to explore specialized services that connect residents to key destinations, such as the "movie bus", the ferry connector, and others.
- d) Undertake initiatives to reduce automobile use through transportation demand management (TDM) programs, promoting car co-ops / shared cars in new and existing developments, and promoting car pooling programs.
- e) Promote public education about the environmental and health benefits of walking, cycling and taking transit.
- f) Pursue opportunities to develop park and ride facilities in strategic areas throughout the region.
- g) Explore strategies to promote the use of low emission vehicles in the region, such as reduced parking charges for Super Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (SULEVs).
- h) Support efforts to allow electric vehicles in the region, including regulatory reform, policy development, transportation planning and infrastructure design.

3. Promote the development of pedestrian oriented and ecologically friendly streets and parking areas in the region.

- a) Undertake an initiative to explore road and parking area design standards that could be applied across the region to support pedestrians and non-automobile uses, and encourage ecologically friendly rain water management.
- b) Review parking requirements during zoning reviews to identify opportunities to limit reliance on automobiles.
- c) Engage in a discussion with the Provincial Ministry of Transportation to encourage their support of more sustainable street design standards, including sidewalks, bike lanes, narrower travel lanes and green infrastructure.

4. Reduce road trips associated with schools.

- a) Work with schools and municipalities to reduce school-related vehicle trips, including identifying opportunities to promote walking, cycling, transit and school buses as primary ways for students to get to and from school.

5. Continue to support a vision for how the E&N railway corridor could support the region's sustainability goals.

- a) Protect the E&N Corridor for transportation and utility uses, possibly including commuter rail, through the Regional Growth Strategy, OCPs and zoning bylaws.

6. Support increased marine and air transportation options linking the region with other areas.

- a) Ensure coordination between the region's transportation and transit systems, BC Ferries, local airports/airplane services and other options linking the region to Vancouver and other areas.
- b) Support the expansion of air travel options in the region, including the Nanaimo Airport and the Qualicum Beach Airport.

Solid Waste

1. Continue to work to achieve the region's zero waste goals.

- a) Continue to implement the Zero Waste Initiative including waste reduction, recycling, composting, and the Waste Stream Management Licensing Bylaw (WSML).
- b) Continue to support provincial product stewardship programs for electronics and other hard-to-recycle material.
- c) Work with large commercial and retail stakeholders to further Zero Waste initiatives.
- d) Support implementation of the Organics Waste Diversion Strategy for the region.
- e) Assess new treatment technologies for residual wastes that save landfill capacity and produce energy, including various waste to energy technologies.
- f) Collaborate with other Regional Districts in their waste management efforts.
- g) Continue with landfill gas collection and energy distribution initiatives.

2. Develop a broader understanding of and commitment to progressive waste management measures in residential, commercial and industrial sectors.

- a) Enhance communications and public education on waste management, composting and recycling.
- b) Explore opportunities to encourage industry, municipalities and stakeholders to develop a regional eco-industrial network pilot project, to reduce waste and increase economic performance by turning waste into resources.



Expansions to transit services provides transportation options for residents of the Region.



Regional and Community Utilities

Context

Wastewater:

Growth Pressures: There is an increasing interest in undertaking development in Rural Village Centres. Density and population thresholds are critical to ensuring cost-effective infrastructure systems.

Future expansions: In the next several years, major upgrades and expansions to the region's wastewater infrastructure will be required. Work is underway to identify the preferred options and processes.

Expectations: Expectations are increasing for the provision of publicly owned and managed sewage collection and treatment systems that result in a high level of effluent treatment.

Innovative systems: Opportunities exist to reclaim heat, reuse byproducts, and recover useful resources from sewage treatment processes that improve cost structures, provide renewable energy sources and result in enhanced environmental performance.

Provincial Role: The Province is looking to local governments to assume increased responsibility for sewage systems through liquid waste management planning.

Water:

Water supply information: The Regional District is developing an information base about the water supplies in the region to assist in making decisions on development and growth.

Concern over water supply: Public concern over protection of the region's water supply resources has increased in the past decade, particularly regarding the protection of the region's groundwater resource.

Watershed approach: There is an increased awareness regarding the need to adopt a watershed-based approach to water supply management that looks at water & wastewater as part of an interconnected system.

Funding: Seek funding from senior governments for innovative strategies.

Strategic Goals and Actions for 2010-2012

Wastewater

1. Continue to improve the quality of treated wastewater in the region to reduce risks and impacts.

- a) Pursue secondary treatment at all community facilities, and where necessary for environmental reasons or reuse opportunities, examine the implications of tertiary treatment.
- b) Explore options to maximize the effective re-use of treated wastewater and biosolids.
- c) Develop effective options for wastewater treatment for Rural Village Centres, including consideration of smaller decentralized facilities.
- d) Continue to explore resource recovery opportunities from wastewater systems as well as ways to reduce or eliminate emissions from wastewater operations.
- e) Work with VIHA and the Ministry of Environment to explore opportunities for composting toilets, greywater reuse, and natural treatment systems.

Water

1. Continue to develop progressive and efficient water management systems across the region.

- a) Develop clarity on the region's water supply capacity and its ability to accommodate growth. Study the water resources in the region in association with the Regional Growth Strategy, with special attention to areas under significant development pressure.
- b) Implement the Drinking Water / Watershed Protection Program in the electoral areas. Promote a watershed based approach to community planning.
- c) Implement the Innovative Options and Opportunities for Sustainable Water Use plan.
- d) Consider opportunities to establish Development Permit areas for the purpose of water conservation, as permitted through Bill 27.

2. Ensure water is used in the most efficient manner possible in homes and businesses.

- a) Continue education programs jointly with the municipalities on using water wisely. Continue the Team WaterSmart education program and build support region wide for these programs.
- b) Review the effectiveness of water use restrictions to decrease use during seasons when water supply is limited.
- c) Consider innovative options and opportunities for sustainable water use, including recycling and re-use where appropriate, and identify options for federal and provincial funding to support innovation.



As the RDN continues to attract new growth, investment in regional and community utilities will ensure a plentiful supply of clean water, and effective management of wastewater.



Recreation and Parks

Context

Excellent Outdoor Opportunities: The region offers a wide range of excellent parks, trails and outdoor recreation opportunities.

Conservation: Conservation, wildlife preservation, and watershed protection are key concerns in the region.

A Diversity of Facilities: A wide range of recreation and community centres are offered throughout the region to meet the physical, social, cultural and health needs of residents.

Current Plans and Initiatives

The RDN is currently implementing a number of plans and initiatives in this area including:

- Area 'A' Community Trails Study
- Nanoose Bay Parks and Open Space Plan
- Area 'E' Community Parks Plan
- Descanso Bay Regional Park Management Plan
- Nanaimo River Regional Park Management Plan
- Regional Parks and Trails Plan - 2005-2015
- Englishman River Regional Park Management Plan
- Recreation Services Master Plan for Oceanside - 2006-2016
- Electoral Area 'A' Recreation and Cultural Services Master Plan - 2007-2017

Looking forward, the RDN will be developing and updating Management Plans for:

- Mount Benson Regional Park
- Coats Marsh Regional Park
- Mount Arrowsmith Massif Regional Park
- Little Qualicum River Regional Park
- Little Qualicum River Estuary Regional Conservation Area
- Beachcomber Regional Park
- Benson Creek Fall Regional Park
- Descanso Bay Regional Park
- Horne Lake Regional Park
- Area 'A' Active Transportation Plan
- 707 Community Park (Electoral Area 'B')



Top Bridge Crossing, cable suspension bridge, Englishman River Regional Park.

Strategic Goals and Actions for 2010-2012

1. Continue to pursue the acquisition of additional parkland in the region.

- a) Continue to harmonize the RDN's parks strategies and plans with the Regional Growth Strategy, official community plans, development permit areas, conservation areas, and zoning.
- b) Continue to implement the Regional Park and Trails Plan to respond to new park and trail needs and opportunities.
- c) Continue to implement the park land acquisition strategy seeking opportunities for funding support and key partnerships to acquire identified high priority areas for parks. Integrate watershed protection objectives into this process.
- d) Building on the success of the 707 lands on Gabriola Island, continue to implement a strategy of density bonusing, transfers and/ or other tools to support the provision of park and open space amenities.

2. Continue to promote innovative park plans and management practices for RDN parks.

- a) Continue to incorporate leading edge practices in parks management, such as integrating climate goals into the acquisition, planning and operations of parks, including carbon sequestration, low emission management practices, pilot projects for off-grid infrastructure and others.
- b) Continue to ensure a diversity of parks to meet recreational as well as conservation objectives.
- c) Develop a parks programming strategy to enhance the recreational experience and opportunities for the region's increasingly diverse population, including youth, ethnic cultures, and others.

3. Increase public understanding of parks opportunities and the desire for environmental protection.

- a) Continue education and communication programs on parks and protected areas to enhance public knowledge and an ethic of stewardship of our shared natural resources.
- b) Continue to promote the ParksGo Website and distribution of the Regional Parks and Trails Brochure.
- c) Promote parks and other regional amenities as an asset to the tourism industry in the RDN.
- d) Implement the Parks Signage program in partnership with UBCM Tourism Funding.

4. Review and implement recommendations from recreation service master plans.

- a) Continue to implement the Electoral Area 'A' Recreation and Culture Service Master Plan.
- b) Monitor the implementation of key recommendations in the Recreation Services Master Plan for the Oceanside Area.



CONCLUSION

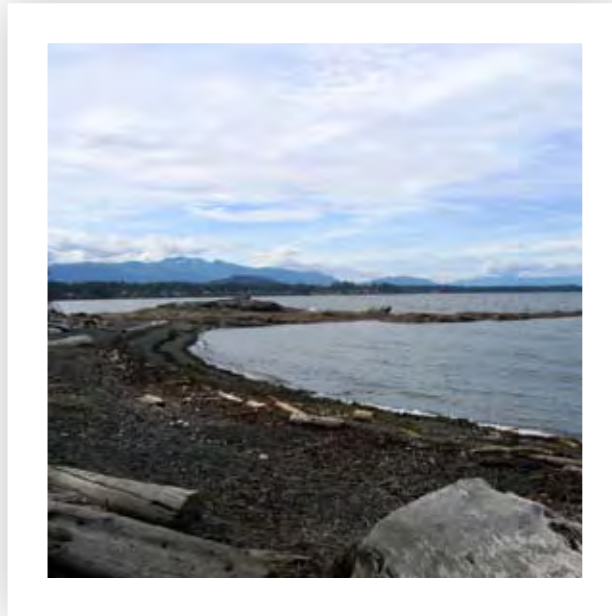
The RDN is one of the most desirable areas of Canada to live. Consequently, the region is experiencing significant growth pressures and increasing demands for services.

This plan summarizes the focus, strategic direction and desired accomplishments for the Board of Directors during its current term of office, in continued pursuit of the vision to become a more sustainable region.

The RDN plays a key role in achieving sustainability objectives because of its regional perspective and jurisdiction, and its ability to bring consensus to many diverse stakeholders and build a strong vision focused on finding solutions to key challenges.

The priorities and actions outlined in this plan are expected to have both short term and long term horizons, recognizing that effective implementation takes time. Furthermore, these priorities and actions have all been created with a view to embedding the principles of sustainability at every level, in a pragmatic manner.

The RDN has taken a position of leadership amongst its peers in BC in pursuing sustainable approaches to growth and development and the Board remains committed to maintaining this position by strengthening its emphasis on implementation. The RDN Board believes that by actively addressing key strategic priorities for the region, including climate and energy, watershed health, economic resilience, and monitoring and adaptation, the Board will build the strength and adaptability necessary to thrive in the face of change, ensuring the Region prospers into the 21st century.



View over Nanoose Bay to the Coast Mountains,
Beachcombers Regional Park.



Adrienne Mercer • Qualicum Beach Heritage Forest

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