
8.0 - Creating a Vibrant and Sustainable Economy

The purpose of this section is to identify the economic strengths in the community and to present the community's objectives and policies for acceptable economic activity in Electoral Area 'G'. The semi-rural nature of the Plan Area has, in the past, functioned to limit any cohesive economic strategy for the Plan Area. Residents of Electoral Area 'G' have indicated that future economic activity should be restricted to appropriate locations in order to protect the integrity of rural areas and residential neighbourhoods. As a result, new activity in urban areas will be restricted to resort commercial and local commercial shops and services in existing commercial designated lands or directed to Wembley Neighbourhood Centre.

In rural areas, the Plan will support efficient resource use and rural land protection to maximize the productivity of agricultural lands, promote sustainable production on forest lands, and establish a strategy for aggregate resources which is environmentally responsible and complemented with the development strategies of the Plan.

The French Creek Boat Harbour contributes to the economy through marine-related commercial activity managed by the French Creek Harbour Authority.

The Official Community Plan will provide a cooperative approach to ensure that the objectives for establishing a vibrant and sustainable economy can be achieved while protecting the environment and community character of Electoral Area 'G'.

8.1 Agriculture

Agriculture is an important economic activity in Electoral Area 'G'. The Plan Area is predominantly rural land much of which is within the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR). Land within the ALR is subject to the provisions of the *Agricultural Land Commission Act*. The Provincial Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) is the principal agency responsible for regulating the use and subdivision of land within the ALR.

There is considerable farming activity in Electoral Area 'G' including dairy farms and pig farming, as well as numerous hobby farms. Farming activity is important to the economy of the Plan Area and the Region and should be protected and supported. The Plan will protect existing rural resources from encroachment of urban uses through its containment strategy and rural protection policies.

Objectives:

1. Support and encourage agricultural activities in the Plan Area for present and future food production.
2. Recognize the needs and activities of agricultural operations when considering non-agricultural uses on adjacent lands.
3. Encourage sustainable and environmentally-sound farming practices which protect surface water, domestic drinking water, irrigation water, and soil quality.
4. Ensure that appropriate levels of groundwater and surface water are available for agricultural needs.

5. Minimize conflicts between farm and non-farm uses.
6. Support and promote the economic viability of the agricultural sector.

Policies:

1. Notwithstanding any other provision of this Plan, all lands within the ALCR are subject to the provisions of the *Agricultural Land Commission Act* and the regulations and orders of the ALC. The Act and regulations generally prohibit or restrict non-farm use and subdivision of ALR lands, unless otherwise permitted or exempt.
2. A full range of agricultural and complementary uses in the ALR is supported and value-added activities are encouraged that can improve farm viability. It is recognized that approval from the ALC may be required.
3. Broad-based agricultural activities including livestock and horticultural uses of a farm, and the processing, production, distribution and sale of agricultural products grown and reared on that farm, shall also be encouraged and supported on agricultural lands. In order to ensure that such activities, including those of an intensive nature, do not give rise to conflicts with adjoining uses or the environment, the RND requires that they be conducted in accordance with recognized codes of practice, standards and environmental guidelines.
4. Farmland¹¹ shall be protected from incompatible uses by designating Farmland¹² Protection Development Permit Areas (on Map No. 10 of this Plan) to ensure that an adequate buffer is provided on lands adjacent to the Agricultural Land Reserve where there is new development adjoining property in the ALR.
5. The design and layout of subdivision on lands adjacent to the Agricultural Land Reserve should consider the current edition of the Ministry of Agriculture's publication titled "*Guide to Edge Planning – Promoting Compatibility Along Urban-Agricultural Edges*".
6. The Provincial Agricultural Land Commission's mandate of protecting farm land by the retention of larger land holdings for present and future agricultural food production is supported. Lands within the ALR are generally included within the 'Rural Resource' and 'Rural' land use designations as identified on Map No. 3 (Land Use Designations).
7. A proposed subdivision adjoining farming areas shall provide buffering areas as required by the Approving Officer or, where designated as a Development Permit Area, shall comply with any buffering requirements and guidelines to protect farming areas pursuant to Section 10 of this Plan.
8. The location and construction of new roads, utilities or communications rights-of-way should be sited to avoid the ALR wherever possible. Where ALR land is required, these rights-of-way should be sited in a manner that will cause minimal impact on the

¹¹ Bylaw No. 1540.02, adopted December 4, 2018

¹² Bylaw No. 1540.02, adopted December 4, 2018

agricultural operations. Alignments should be established in consultation with affected local landowners and approval is required from the BC Agricultural Land Commission.

9. The Regional District of Nanaimo should consider the formation of an Agricultural Advisory Committee.

Advocacy Policies:

10. The ALC is encouraged to deny Subdivision, within the ALR, to a parcel size less than 8 hectares or non-farm uses where it would reduce the potential agricultural productivity of the land or where it would be contrary to the urban boundary and containment strategy of this Plan.

8.2 Forestry

Forestry is major land use in Electoral Area 'G'. In addition to its economic value, residents and visitors recognize private resource lands as one source of the outstanding and unique amenities of the area. Future utilization of these lands must recognize both the public and private ownership of this resource in respect to its aesthetic and environmental value, and as an economic generator for the local economy. Accordingly, consideration may be given to opportunities that generate broader community benefits in association with these assets.

In recognition of their value to the community, residents have expressed a desire to protect forest lands and related activities. Also supported are sustainable and environmentally sound harvesting and forest regeneration practices and the restriction of intensive processing activities in proximity to established or future residential development.

Forest lands are predominantly managed through private forestry interests on private managed forest lands or through tenure on provincial crown lands. Policies that relate to matters beyond the jurisdiction of the Regional District are intended to help guide senior governments in their decision-making processes.

Objectives:

1. Support and maintain the long-term viability of the natural resource land base and protect it from activities and land uses that may diminish its resource value or potential.
2. Protect and support forest land resources for harvesting and reproduction on productive forestry land.
3. Support the public's use of forest lands for recreational enjoyment and education.
4. Minimize the impact of resource operations and activities on the natural environment and on neighbouring land uses and development.

Policies:

1. The retention of large land holdings for sustainable forestry production is supported.

2. Private managed forest lands, except those located within the Agricultural Land Reserve at the date of the adoption of this Plan are designated rural resource as shown on Map No. 3. The location of Private Managed Forest Lands is shown on Map No. 7 (Features That Support the Economy).
3. Subdivision of land within the rural resource land use designation to a parcel size smaller than 50 hectares is not supported. Subdivision of land within the rural resource land use designation is not supported where it would reduce the future productivity and sustainability of forest land or where it would be contrary to the urban containment strategy or rural integrity policy of this Plan.
4. Despite Policy 3 above, the RDN may consider applications to permit development within a smaller footprint and/or a density in accordance with Section 5.2 of this Plan. It is noted that a Regional Growth Strategy amendment is required.
5. For Zoning Amendment Applications to allow non-forestry use of land within the rural resource designation, the RDN shall consider the impact on forest activities and the sustainability of the forest resource.
6. Developments proposed adjacent to private managed forest lands or Crown lands with forestry potential should be designed in a manner that minimizes conflicts between the proposed development and the forest management activities. Buffering to prevent wind damage to merchantable timber should be provided on the land proposed for development. Development shall include the provision of environmentally acceptable methods of handling surface water flows from upslope forested lands.

Advocacy Policies:

7. Forestry operators are encouraged to consider the impact of forestry operations on the natural environment and neighbouring land uses.

8.3 *Aggregates and Other Extractable Resources*

The predominant mineral resource within the Plan Area is gravel, with concentrations south of Parksville, along the Inland Island Highway. There may also be potential for coal bed gas and other energy development potential.

The regulation of aggregate extraction falls primarily within the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Energy, Mines, and Petroleum Resources. The Ministry is responsible for operational issues, such as public/worker safety, environmental protection, closure, and reclamation of aggregate operations. The Regional District, through zoning, is only able to regulate areas where processing of aggregate resources is permitted. All mining and mineral exploration activities are subject to the *Mines Act* and *Mineral Tenure Act*.

Objectives:

1. Protect lands with aggregate or mineral resources from development, which would render them inaccessible.
 2. Minimize conflicts between extraction activities and adjacent land uses.
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3. Support site rehabilitation and reclamation of mined landscapes.
4. Support the identification and mitigation of environmental impacts from existing and proposed resource extraction activities.

Policies:

1. Lands with known aggregate or mineral resource potential are generally included in the Rural Resource designation of this Plan as shown on Map No. 3 (Land Use Designations). Zoning to allow processing activities, which are directly related to mineral or aggregate extraction, may be considered by the RDN without an amendment to this Plan.
 2. The management of aggregate resources to minimize the environmental impacts, particularly the impact on groundwater resources, is supported.
 3. Alternative development and reclamation strategies shall be supported where they are consistent with the policies in this Plan and the Regional Growth Strategy.
 4. Gravel extraction is not supported without the appropriate conservation and reclamation Plans.
 5. The Ministry of Energy and Mines and Petroleum Resources' requirements for a performance bond is supported to ensure proper reclamation of altered landscapes.
 6. The Regional District of Nanaimo may consider applications to rezone existing gravel pits without an amendment to this Plan to allow primary processing and related activities associated with gravel extraction within the '*Rural*' or '*Rural Resource*' land use designation as shown of Map No. 3 – Land Use Designations of this Plan provided that:
 - a. a conceptual Plan for the proposed use including a long term vision for the property is provided;
 - b. a reclamation Plan acceptable to the Regional District of Nanaimo and any adjacent municipality is submitted by the applicant which identifies how land will be reverted back to rural activities through reclamation, to ensure that the lands will continue to be available for rural land uses;
 - c. the proposal satisfies all groundwater resources policies established by Section 2.6 of this Plan;
 - d. An environmental management Plan is submitted by the applicant outlining environmental protection and monitoring procedures;
 - e. the proposal addresses concerns related to visual integrity and buffering of the Inland Island Highway if applicable;
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- f. consideration is given to future inclusion of the subject property and surrounding land into the City of Parksville or Qualicum Beach and the compatibility of future development with adjoining areas within each municipality;
 - g. where the land is in the ALR, support from the BC Agricultural Land Commission is required prior to consideration;
 - h. where the land is adjoining the Inland Island Highway, approvals from the MOT will be required prior to consideration; and,
 - i. The Regional District of Nanaimo may require the posting of a bond or other acceptable security (if deemed appropriate) so as to ensure compliance with the conditions of the permit.
7. Zoning amendments that have unmitigated impacts to the natural environment including groundwater resources shall not be supported.

Advocacy Policies:

8. The Ministry of Energy Mines, and Petroleum Resources (MEMPR) in considering applications for resource extraction activities is encouraged to:
- a. consider the environmental impacts, including the impacts on the quality and quantity of groundwater of the proposed activity and ensure that all impacts are appropriately mitigated;
 - b. require bonding and/or security to ensure that site reclamation is complete to the satisfaction of the MEMPR and the RDN; and,
 - c. consider the impacts of the extraction activity including, but not limited to noise, traffic, dust, odour, vibration, and other quality of life values.

8.4 Industrial Land Use Designation

The Plan Area has a limited amount of industrial development. Given the existing industrial lands within the City of Parksville and within Electoral Area 'F', the intent of this Plan is to recognize the existing industrial uses and only support minor expansion of industrial uses within the Plan Area. The Plan also promotes the re-designation of existing industrial sites to less intrusive light industrial uses which would be more compatible with adjoining rural residential land uses.

Objectives:

- 1. Support appropriate industrial development in existing industrial sites.
- 2. Ensure that the form, character, and scale of industrial development follow community preference.
- 3. Avoid conflicts between industrial and residential uses.
- 4. Provide opportunity for a limited amount of industrial development in the Plan Area.

Policies:

1. This Plan recognizes the existing industrial operations in the Plan Area. Future industrial development will be restricted to the industrial land use designation as shown on Map No. 3 (Land Use Designations).
2. The further designation or expansion of land for industrial purposes is not supported.
3. Notwithstanding Policy 2 above, this Plan supports a review of the Electoral Area boundary between Electoral Area 'G' and Electoral Area 'F' to determine the feasibility of adjusting the boundaries of Electoral Area 'F' to include lands located on the south side of Highway 19 that may have industrial potential that are currently within Electoral Area 'G' which are contiguous with the existing industrial lands within Electoral Area 'F'.
4. A minimum parcel size of 2 hectares shall be supported for sites designated industrial by this Plan.
5. All existing industrial zoned lands may retain their existing zoning. However, the Regional District will consider alternative proposals if it removes or reduces a conflict between industrial uses and adjacent residential uses and is consistent with the Regional Growth Strategy policies and the urban containment policies in this Plan.
6. All industrial development shall be conducted in accordance with the Environmental Protection measures identified in Section 2.0 and subsections of this Plan.
7. Development Permit Areas shall be established to guide the form and character of industrial development in existing industrial sites. Compliance with the development permit area guidelines in the zoning bylaw and objectives¹³ of Section 10 of this Plan shall be required including buffering requirements from adjoining uses.
8. Guidelines for the form and character of development or redevelopment compatible with the City of Parksville and the visual integrity of the Inland Island Highway is supported.
9. The expansion, development or redevelopment of existing industrial sites shall consider the adequacy of the road pattern for traffic generated the environmental impacts of the proposed development, and the buffering and screening of sites.

8.5 Commercial Land Use Designation

Commercial uses in the Plan Area include local commercial and resort commercial uses both within and outside of the Urban Containment Boundary (UCB). Commercial designated sites are identified on Map No. 3 (Land Use Designations) and Map No. 7 (Features that Support the Economy).

Objectives:

1. Balance economic growth with the protection of the environment and the maintenance of rural and coastal residential neighbourhood values in Electoral Area 'G'.

¹³ Bylaw No. 1540.02, adopted December 4, 2018

2. Support the development of new local commercial shops and services at existing commercially designated properties and within the neighbourhood centres.
3. Ensure that the character, form and scale of commercial development complement community preference and is compatible with surrounding uses.

Policies:

1. The commercial land use designation is shown on Map No. 3 (Land Use Designations).
2. Sites designated commercial by this Plan in urban areas outside of neighbourhood centres, may be considered for rezoning to provide for potential redevelopment with alternative forms of land use including recreational, institutional, and small-scale neighbourhood commercial or mixed residential commercial, with the maximum number of residential units not exceeding 15 units per hectare, and will not take the form of highway strip commercial development.
3. Sites designated commercial by this Plan located outside of the UCB shall be restricted to resort commercial uses. The rezoning of any commercially designated site located outside of the UCB to permit other forms of commercial use is not supported.
4. A minimum parcel size of 2 hectares shall be supported for sites designated commercial by this Plan located outside of the UCB.
5. Lands designated commercial by this Plan located inside the UCB shall have a flexible minimum parcel size which is dependent on the availability of community water and community sewer servicing and must be suitable for the use(s) being proposed taking into consideration areas for development, parking, and landscaping.
6. Expansion of the Commercial land use designation outside of the UCB is not supported.
7. The expansion, development, or redevelopment of existing commercial sites shall consider the adequacy of the road pattern for traffic generated, and the buffering and screening of sites.
8. All commercial development shall be conducted in accordance with the environmental protection measures identified in Section 2.0 of this Plan.
9. This Plan supports and recognizes the existing commercial and marine related activities associated with the French Creek Harbour. It is also recognized that the French Creek Harbour is under the jurisdiction of the French Creek Harbour Authority and Fisheries and Oceans Canada.
10. Development Permit Areas for the form and character of commercial sites shall be established. Compliance with the development permit area guidelines in the zoning bylaw and objectives¹⁴ in Section 10 of this Plan is required. Should lands be rezoned to commercial where supported by this Plan, the subject lands shall be included in the form and character Development Permit Area.

¹⁴ Bylaw No. 1540.02, adopted December 4, 2018

11. The Regional District's business licensing powers may be requested to assist in the management of commercial uses in Electoral Area 'G'.
12. The use of land or buildings in Electoral Area 'G' for a casino, video gambling, slot machines or a gambling establishment is not supported.
13. Strata conversion of resort commercial uses to residential uses is not supported.
14. 'Highway strip' or 'big box' retail commercial development is not supported in Electoral Area 'G'.
15. For the land legally described as: Lot A, District Lot 42, Nanoose Land District, Plan 30121 the use of the land should be restricted to seasonal campground only.

8.6 Home Based Business

The trend towards owning and operating a home based business has been steadily increasing as people find it easier, and often more profitable, to run their own business. The Regional District of Nanaimo does not currently have a business licensing function and relies on a Home Based Business Registry to process and track home based businesses within the Plan Area. Home based businesses are an important contributing factor towards supporting and maintaining a vibrant and sustainable economy and when conducted in a responsible manner they help to build a sustainable community.

Objective:

1. Support home based business uses which have minimal impact on the neighbourhood and the rural character of the Plan Area.

Policies:

1. Home based business uses shall continue to be supported within the Plan Area.
2. Periodic reviews of the Land Use and Subdivision Bylaw may be conducted to ensure that the regulations are compatible with the changing needs and trends of home based businesses, as well as the neighbourhoods in which these businesses are located.
3. The RDN should consider requesting business licensing powers to reinforce conformity with Regional District home based business regulations.
4. Home based business regulations of the RDN should be enforced where there is a contravention related to noise, odour, size, or appearance.