

LEADERSHIP IN CREATING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES



The 2006-2009 Strategic Plan





## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
CONTEXT	6
MISSION	9
VISION	10
STRATEGIC PRIORITIES	12
THE REGIONAL FEDERATION	13
SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES	16
TRANSPORTATION	19
ENERGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE	22
REGIONAL UTILITY SYSTEMS	24
RECREATION AND PARKS	27
CONCLUSION	29

## INTRODUCTION

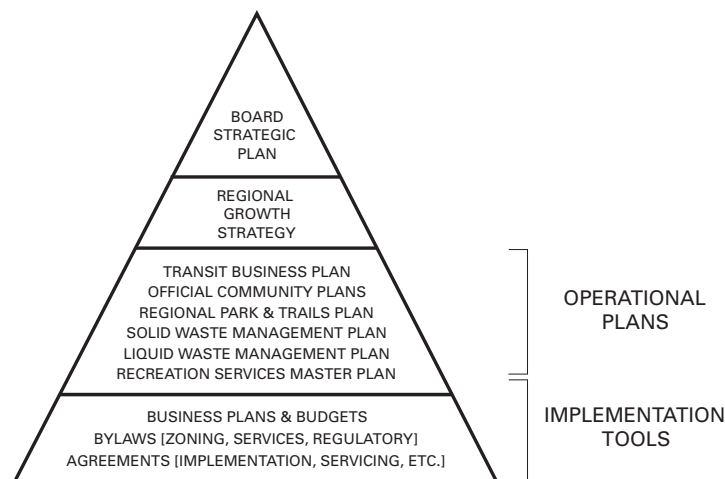
This strategic plan sets out the priorities of the Regional District of Nanaimo Board for the provision of services to residents in the 207,000 hectare region centrally located on the east coast of Vancouver Island. It establishes short term priorities for 2006 to 2009 that correspond to the Board's current term of office, as well as the Board's longer term priorities for 2009 and beyond.

The Regional District of Nanaimo provides a full range of services to residents in the region. It provides:

- **local services** to individual electoral areas, such as community parks, water utilities, and animal control;
- **sub-regional services** to areas that cross municipal and/or electoral area boundaries, such as building inspection, bylaw enforcement, community planning, sewer utilities, and emergency planning; and
- **regional services** to the entire region, such as administration, grants-in-aid, regional planning, regional parks, liquid waste management planning, and solid waste management.

Each municipality and electoral area has a say in what services the Regional District provides to it.

The strategic plan influences Regional District of Nanaimo decisions about the services it provides to ensure the region continues to be a place where people enjoy living, working, playing, visiting, and doing business. As illustrated in the diagram, the Board Strategic Plan provides direction to the Regional Growth Strategy, which in turn provides direction to a full spectrum of operational plans, such as official community plans, liquid waste and solid waste management plans, and plans concerning recreation and parks. Operational plans are implemented using tools such as business plans and budgets, bylaws, and agreements.



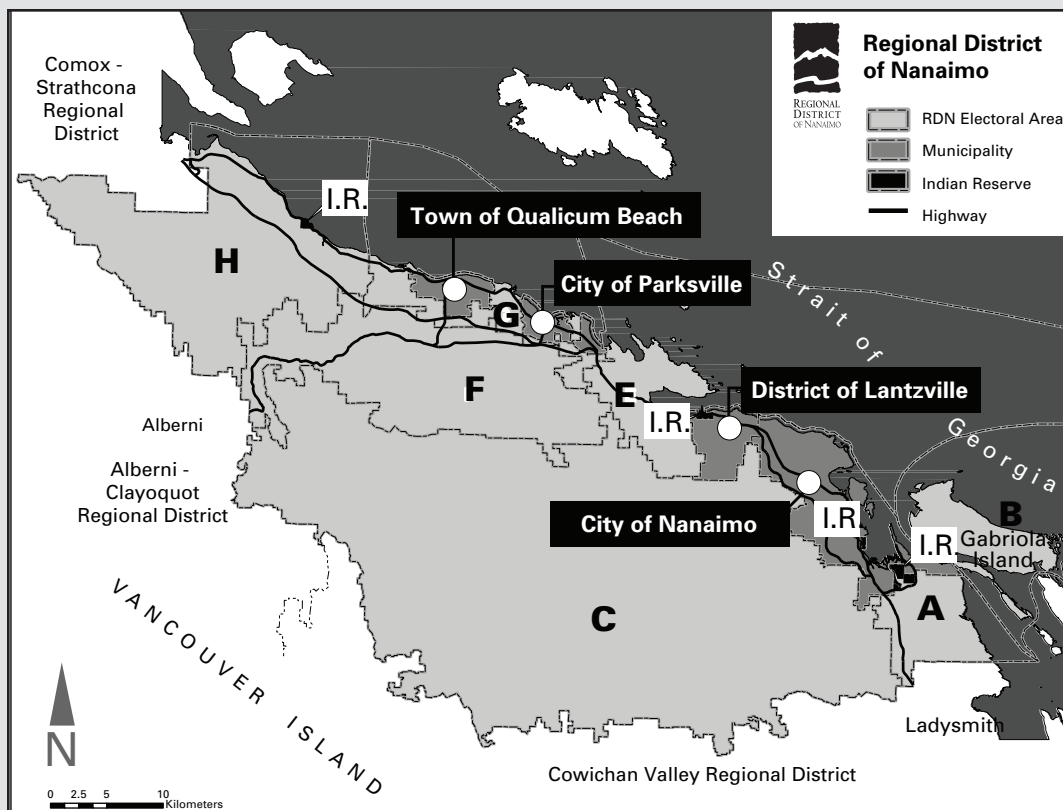
The Regional District of Nanaimo is a regional federation of four municipalities and seven electoral areas.

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 and Cassidy
- B: Gabriola, Decourcey and 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).



## CONTEXT

Global, national, provincial, and local trends and issues will challenge the region in the twenty-first century, and the Regional District is ready to face these challenges.

### **Global Trends**

Globally, there is a growing recognition that the climate is getting warmer, and this could have far reaching environmental, social and economic consequences. One of the key reasons the climate is getting warmer is because we are consuming more fossil fuels in transportation, manufacturing, heating, cooling and electricity generation, and this increased consumption results in increased greenhouse gas emissions which warm the Earth's atmosphere. Consequently, there will be a need to identify and pursue ways of reducing our consumption of fossil fuels.

Local governments can have a significant positive impact by reducing fossil fuel consumption, and the Regional District is working in partnership with its member municipalities to create and implement a plan to reduce local fossil fuel consumption. The warming climate also means that winters will be shorter and warmer, resulting in less snowmelt to recharge the groundwater. Consequently, the Regional District will need to monitor changes in groundwater recharge and the availability of water to residents in the region.

### **National Trends**

At a national level, the federal government of Canada has committed to transferring gas tax revenues to local governments for use on strategic investments targeted at enhancing community sustainability. Local governments such as the Regional District of Nanaimo are encouraged to have integrated community sustainability plans to access this source of funding. Other federal government policy shifts, such as social and taxation policy changes, could have an impact on the type of services the Regional District is called upon to provide.



## **Provincial Trends**

The Regional District of Nanaimo expects that it will have to continue to address issues arising from reduced provincial government service levels. Over the last decade the Province has been moving to a “performance based standards and guidelines” approach for such things as sewage disposal and drinking water system approvals and environmental protection, to name a few. Residents have expressed concern that reliance on self reporting/self regulation is not as reliable as hands-on management and oversight. Local governments such as the Regional District of Nanaimo are under pressure to be proactive in safeguarding the local environment but find themselves lacking specialized expertise and budgets to respond.

## **Local Trends**

The Regional District of Nanaimo has taken a leadership role amongst its peers in BC in pursuing sustainable approaches to growth and development, and remains committed to continuing along this path. The Regional District plays a key role in achieving sustainability objectives because of its regional perspective and jurisdiction, and its ability to bring together many stakeholders to build strong visions and find solutions to key challenges. Furthermore, the Regional District sees the role of government as central to finding a strategic balance between environmental, social and economic objectives in the region, to the benefit of all.

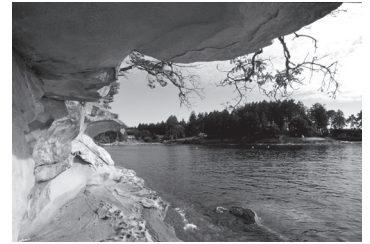
Locally, the Regional District of Nanaimo perceives that residents’ expectations for services are increasing, while residents’ appetite for increased taxation to provide services is not. Residents want to be informed about the Regional District’s activities, and involved in Regional District decision making. Residents are becoming more vocal about their interests in seeing the Regional District pursue initiatives that will enhance the region’s sustainability. There is an increasing interest in some parts of the region to convert unincorporated electoral areas into municipalities, and the RDN is being called upon more often to facilitate the discussion and resolution of issues related to services provided in multiple jurisdictions. Local environmental, social and economic trends are also having an impact, as outlined in the table below:

## Local Environmental, Social & Economic Trends

Environmental Trends	Social Trends	Economic Trends
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increasing demands for water &amp; water supply protection</li><li>• Increasing threats to existing water supply sources</li><li>• Increasing concerns about sewage disposal (septic system performance, wastewater treatment plant capacity)</li><li>• Increasing demands for environmental protection</li><li>• Increasing demands to acquire environmentally significant properties for parkland</li><li>• Increasing threat to air quality</li><li>• Increasing demands for public transit</li><li>• Increasing need to reduce amount of solid waste disposed</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Steadily increasing population</li><li>• Increasing proportion of older residents</li><li>• Increasing cost of housing</li><li>• Migration of urbanites with high service expectations to rural areas of region</li><li>• Increasing demand for community facilities &amp; limited funding to provide them</li><li>• Increased desire for access to services and jobs within local neighbourhoods</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increasing construction costs</li><li>• Continued decline of forestry &amp; fishing industries on the island</li><li>• Increasing interest in tourism, particularly ecological and cultural based tourism</li><li>• Increasing focus on the development of tourism infrastructure (e.g. convention centre, downtown development)</li><li>• Increasing cost of energy</li><li>• Increasing urgency to replace aging infrastructure</li></ul>







## 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 and by ensuring access to basic services in unincorporated electoral areas.

The Regional District of Nanaimo has 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;
- Regional Parks and Trails Plan;
- Recreation Services Master Plans;
- Transit Business Plan;
- Emergency Preparedness Plan.

**2. To deliver a wide range of services at the local, sub-regional and regional level to support the implementation of these plans, including, but not limited to:**

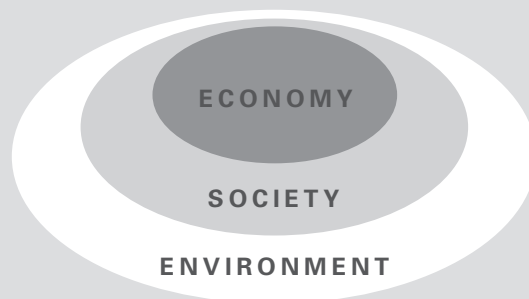
- Creating, maintaining, and enforcing regulations for land use and buildings;
- Providing solid waste collection and disposal services;
- Operating liquid waste collection and treatment facilities;
- Operating drinking water and streetlight utilities;
- Establishing and maintaining regional and community parks and trails;
- Operating recreational facilities;
- Developing and delivering recreational and cultural programs;
- Delivering public transit service;
- Providing fire and emergency services;
- Raising public awareness about the Regional District's activities and how they contribute towards the achievement of the Regional District's strategies and plans.
- Acquiring, managing, developing and maintaining regional park land and electoral area community park land.

## VISION

The vision statement is based on the characteristics of a sustainable Regional District of Nanaimo developed by the Regional Growth Monitoring Advisory Committee as a part of its work on the State of Sustainability Project. The State of Sustainability Project is intended to provide information to inform future changes to the Regional Growth Strategy. Consequently, it is anticipated that changes may be made to the Regional Growth Strategy to emphasize the Regional District's goals, policies and actions regarding the sustainability characteristics, to help achieve a vision of sustainability outlined below.



Sustainability is about recognizing the inter-relationships between our environment, our society and our economy. It is about recognizing that people are part of the ecosystem, and that the economic and social lives of people should be integrated into the environment in ways that maintain or enhance the environment, rather than degrade or destroy it. Put another way, sustainability seems to be about recognizing that our economy exists within society, that society is much more than economy, that society exists within the environment, and that the environment surrounds society, as illustrated in the diagram below.





The RDN Board of Directors intend to make decisions and undertake projects over the next twenty-five years to achieve the vision defined below.

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.

## STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The following strategic priorities outline areas of key focus for the next 3 years in the region. These priorities have been identified in response to the perspectives of leadership and specific challenges facing the RDN over that time. As well, these priorities have a longer term perspective, of charting a course to increased sustainability over the next decade.

Past strategic plans have had various priorities and much progress has been made on those over recent years. Many are now incorporated into the daily business of the RDN. Some continue to remain as ongoing strategic issues and they are incorporated into this plan where possible.

The Board has established the strategic priorities for 2006-2009 as follows:

- 1. The regional federation**
- 2. Sustainable communities**
- 3. Transportation**
- 4. Energy and climate change**
- 5. Regional utility systems**
- 6. Recreation and parks**



## THE REGIONAL FEDERATION

### Context

- **A cooperative federation** - The RDN is a “federation” of municipalities and electoral areas who derive significant benefit from working together on key issues and on service provision.
- **Regional perspective** - The “sustainability performance” of the region is dependent in many areas 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.
- **Incorporation** - Some electoral areas as they grow, find it more beneficial to incorporate and take on their own services rather than rely on the RDN to provide them, and this process needs to be done as smoothly as possible.

### 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 agreements for public amenities that are paid for by one regional partner but shared with all.
  - **Communications** - The RDN has several effective communications initiatives to raise awareness about key issues and the activities and programs the RDN offers.

### Strategic Goals and Actions for 2006-2009

The following outlines the strategic goals and actions for the RDN for 2006-2009:

- 1. Continue to work together to be one of the most cooperative, well managed and visionary regional districts in the province.**
  - a. Support innovations and sustainability-oriented goals and initiatives in the region.

- b. Continue to develop ways for the region's municipalities, electoral areas and other key stakeholders to work collaboratively.

**2. Strengthen the working relationship between municipalities and electoral areas as regional federation partners, and increase effectiveness through cooperation.**

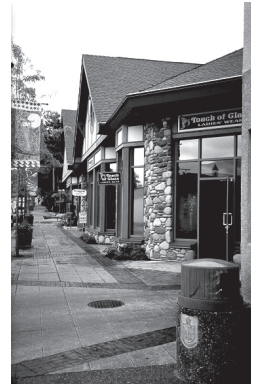
- a. Continue to enhance cooperation between municipalities and electoral areas through the regional district model by supporting regional functions and service agreements.
- b. Develop a strategy for municipalities and the Regional District to work more cooperatively at a staff level by considering the establishment of staff committees that meet regularly to share issues, information and policy directions. In addition to the existing meetings of the Chief Administrative Officers of all the municipalities and the regional district, additional staff committees for consideration might include:
  - i. Regional Engineering Committee (Directors of Public Works &/ Engineering)
  - ii. Regional Planning and Development Committee (Directors of Planning)
  - iii. Regional Parks and Recreation Committee (Directors of Parks & Recreation)

**3. Enhance the reputation and recognition of the RDN as a valuable and effective level of government.**

- a. Review and explore opportunities for corporate communication and consultation initiatives including the development of an "RDN brand" to ensure all communications enhance the desired reputation and credibility of the regional district.

**4. Increase public understanding of sustainability issues and how regional district decisions make the region more sustainable.**

- a. Review current communication initiatives in light of this 2006-2009 Strategic Plan to ensure communication priorities are aligned with its policy objectives and directions.
- b. Develop a list of sustainability issues or criteria to inform all communications initiatives by providing context on issues and goals.
- c. Complete and publish the Sustainability Report and engage the public in discussion on its issues.



- 5. Enhance the Board’s ability to have open, frank, balanced and objective discussions on complex issues prior to making decisions.**
  - a. Continue to pursue opportunities to discuss complex issues and explore the full range of opportunities for solutions that may exist.
- 6. Achieve increased clarity on future expansion of municipalities and incorporation of electoral areas.**
  - a. Undertake a strategic discussion with the electoral areas about the benefits and challenges of incorporation over time, based on growth, infrastructure expectations, and other issues.
- 7. 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 between the RDN and adjacent regional districts, and between the RDN and other orders of government, about matters of mutual interest.

# SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

## Context

- **Regional Growth Strategy** - The region's Regional Growth Strategy has been adopted and agreements related to its implementation are being created with our municipal members. Growth management is widely acknowledged to be one of the most important aspects of building more sustainable communities because of the century-long implications of how communities are structured and developed.
- **Density** - Increased density is required to maintain urban containment boundaries but densification must be undertaken in a careful manner to maintain the quality of life in the region.
- **Environmental protection** - Protection of the natural environment within and around the communities in the RDN is critical to maintenance of its water supplies, ecosystem integrity and livability.
- **Industry** - Many are concerned about the impacts of industrial development on watersheds and rural areas as they migrate from more populated areas.
- **Housing** - Affordable housing is becoming an issue in many of the region's communities as a result of volatile construction and energy markets 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. Strategies need to be developed to address any increases in cost associated with constructing more sustainable buildings.
- **Building inspection** - Some areas within the region are currently without building inspection. Building inspection assists in maintaining public health and safety, environmental protection, and related goals of sustainability.

## Current Plans and Initiatives

- The RDN currently has a number of plans and initiatives in place in this area including:
  - An adopted **Regional Growth Strategy**;
  - An **Urban Containment Implementation Agreement**;
  - The **State of Sustainability Project**; and
  - A **Green Buildings Project**.





## **Strategic Goals and Actions for 2006-2009**

### **1. Continue the implementation of the Regional Growth Strategy.**

- a. Review the Regional Growth Strategy in 2007.
- b. Continue to work with municipalities and electoral areas to incorporate the Regional Growth Strategy vision and principles into official community plans. In particular, facilitate the inclusion of policies into official community plans to focus growth into nodes inside the Urban Containment Boundary (i.e. primarily Village Centres inside the Urban Containment Boundary in electoral areas and a hierarchy of different sizes or types of nodes inside the Urban Containment Boundary elsewhere).
- c. Explore opportunities for accommodating growth through infill in nodes within the urban containment boundaries along the Old Island Highway corridor.

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

- a. Continue work to develop a strategy to support the construction of green buildings in the region, and report to the Board on actions the RDN can take to promote the development of sustainable neighbourhoods in the region.
- b. Consider the development of ecosystem enhancement-oriented design guidelines for new developments, to encourage enhanced stewardship of ecosystem health in new developments.
- c. Encourage neighbourhood development projects within the urban containment boundary to become models for more sustainable, urban village developments. 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. Expand communications initiatives to increase understanding of growth management issues and support for sustainable community development policies and practices.
- b. Complete the Sustainability Report to provide baseline information about the sustainability of the region.
- c. Conduct a public workshop to discuss the results of the Sustainability Report and actions that could be taken to enhance the sustainability of the region.

**4. Increase affordable housing and housing choices that support “aging in place”**

- a. Develop a Regional Housing Strategy to promote the development of affordable housing and housing that supports “aging in place.”
- b. Review single family housing areas, both current and planned, within the urban containment boundaries, for opportunities to increase density in an appropriate manner, and develop some options to facilitate discussion on how best to increase density.
- c. Explore incentives to favour higher density development on land inside the Urban Containment Boundary and ensure future costs of infrastructure are allocated appropriately based on a sustainable development perspective.

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

- a. Continue discussions with the electoral areas with the intent of developing a strategy to implement building inspection services across all electoral areas in the region.

**6. 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 a Resource and Industrial Lands Strategy to effectively manage the growth, migration and impacts of industry on communities, watersheds, and economic development in the region.
- b. Explore development controls that can ensure the preservation of forest cover and watershed integrity in large-lot rural areas.

**7. 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.



## TRANSPORTATION

### Context

- **Transit system** - The RDN manages the region's transit system in association with BC Transit. Public transportation options include conventional transit busses equipped with bike racks and wheelchair / scooter accessible ramps, and handyDART busses for people with disabilities.
- **Transportation priority** - Transportation planning and design needs to 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 can assist in increasing the demand for transit and non-automobile forms of transportation.

### 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 programs** under development;
  - A **Fleet Replacement Strategy**; and
  - A **Corporate Climate Change Plans** under development that addresses the transit fleet.

### Strategic Goals and Actions for 2006-2009

1. **Continue to enhance transit service in the RDN in consultation with BC Transit, municipalities and other stakeholders**
  - a. Explore opportunities to increase funding for transit, including strategies to access federal gas-tax transfers.
  - b. Increase the accessibility of the bus fleet for people with disabilities.
  - c. Continue to develop the UPASS program.
  - d. Explore the feasibility of expanding transit service in rural areas.
  - e. Increase vehicle fleet efficiencies and performance in the transit fleet through consideration of new and clean technologies, a diversity of vehicle sizes, and the use of clean or renewable fuels.
  - f. Increase the number of fuel efficient vehicles used by all departments of the Regional District wherever practical and affordable.

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

- a. Explore incentives to encourage increases in ridership, including route design and timing to increase convenience and efficiency of the transit system, and address the need for a central transit exchange in downtown Nanaimo.
- b. Undertake initiatives to reduce automobile use such as creating a transportation demand management (TDM) program, promoting car co-ops / shared cars in new and existing developments, and promoting car pooling programs.
- c. Promote public education on the environmental and health benefits of walking, cycling and taking transit.

**3. Consider opportunities to reduce the impact of parking in the region.**

- a. Encourage a review of parking requirements and reducing the impact of parking areas wherever possible in developments in the region.
- b. Consider the development of design guidelines to maintain equivalent air and surface temperatures in urban and rural areas and to eliminate stormwater contamination from parking areas.
- c. Review other jurisdictions' pilot projects to reduce parking requirements when auto co-op cars are provided (eg: Vancouver).

**4. Promote the development of more pedestrian-oriented streets in the region.**

- a. Undertake an initiative to explore road design standards for the electoral areas that support pedestrians and non-automobile uses, and encourage ecologically friendly stormwater management. Engage in a discussion with the Provincial Ministry of Transportation during this process.
- b. Explore a partnership between the RDN and the municipalities, to create pedestrian street guidelines that can be used by all jurisdictions in the region.



**5. Reduce road trips associated with schools.**

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

**6. 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 uses through the Regional Growth Strategy, OCPs and zoning bylaws.

**7. 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 Collishaw Airport and the Qualicum Beach airport.

# ENERGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

## Context

- **Climate change** - Our climate is changing as a result of human-caused emissions. This change is predicted to bring climate variability and extreme weather, causing floods, droughts and storms that will affect local government services, assets and infrastructure. Adaptation to these changes will be required.
- **Emissions** - Addressing air quality and climate change emissions is an issue for all governments with numerous implications, costs and benefits.
- **RDN jurisdiction** - The RDN manages a number of systems that are key to emissions including:
  - The region's transit system;
  - Solid waste facilities;
  - Liquid waste treatment plants; and
  - Land use planning and building regulations.
- **Energy demand** - The demand for energy is growing in the region and there are many challenges to bringing new supplies of energy on line.
- **Energy profile** - Much of BC's current energy is fairly clean (hydroelectric) and a certain percentage of new sources are also clean and renewable, but the percentage of BC electricity generated from fossil fuels is growing.
- **Technologies** - There are new technologies that can provide locally sourced, renewable or clean energy, especially for heating.
- **Costs and benefits** - The cost of energy is predicted to continue to rise. Renewable and local energy supplies can increase energy efficiency but cost more initially. However, they may also result in long term security, price stability, new revenues, lower emissions and local economic development.

## Current Plans and Initiatives

- The RDN currently have a number of initiatives in place in this area including:
  - **Corporate and Community Energy and Emissions Management Plan Project;**
  - **Landfill gas capture** initiatives;
  - **Transit** promotion; and
  - **Green Buildings Project.**



## **Strategic Goals and Actions for 2006-2009**

### **1. Develop corporate and community energy and climate change plans for the region.**

- a. Develop a Corporate Energy and Emissions Management Plan for the RDN and assist member municipalities (City of Nanaimo, City of Parksville, Town of Qualicum Beach, District of Lantzville) prepare similar plans for their own operations.
- b. Develop a Community Energy and Climate Change Plan for the region that identifies potential sustainable power supply sources, ways to increase overall energy efficiency and ways to reduce air quality, particulates and greenhouse gas emissions.
- c. Investigate the impact of climate change on RDN services, assets and infrastructure, and prepare appropriate plans for adaptation.
- d. 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.

### **2. Explore alternative energy sources that may be appropriate for the region.**

- a. Consider the viability of promoting alternative energy sources, including:
  - i. Solar
  - ii. Wind
  - iii. Run of river
  - iv. Incineration
  - v. Others.
- b. Continue with landfill gas collection and energy distribution initiatives.

### **3. Promote initiatives that reduce emissions associated with transportation in the region.**

- a. Continue promoting the choice of transit for transportation in the region.
- b. Explore strategies to promote the use of low emission vehicles in the region, such as reduced parking charges for SULEVs (Super Ultra Low Emission Vehicles).
- c. Continue promoting a compact development form through plans and bylaws to reduce the need for automobile travel.

### **4. Promote public education on energy and climate change issues.**

- a. Engage the public in the development of the Community Energy and Climate Change Plan and undertake ongoing communications and public education on the issues of climate change, energy management and air quality.

# REGIONAL UTILITY SYSTEMS

## Context

### 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 leadership steps in reducing waste in the region, including adopting a Zero Waste Plan that aims to increase waste diversion from the current rate of 56% to roughly 75% by 2010.
- **Organics waste diversion** – The Board has adopted an Organics Diversion Strategy that addresses diversion opportunities for the 35% of the compostable organic material currently sent to landfill.
- **Waste Stream Licensing Bylaw** – The Board has adopted a Waste Stream Management Licensing Bylaw (WSML) to regulate and encourage private sector investment in the infrastructure required to achieve Zero Waste goals.
- **Waste growth** – In spite of the above Zero Waste efforts, due to population and economic growth, residual waste to landfill is increasing and consuming valuable landfill space.

### Liquid waste

- **Growth pressures** - There is an increasing interest in undertaking developments in the Village Centres in the electoral areas. These developments would benefit from the provision of community sewer service.
- **Expectations** - Expectations are increasing for the provision of public sewage treatment systems that include a high level of effluent treatment.
- **Private utilities** - The RDN has indicated a preference not to develop many privately managed liquid waste utility systems throughout the region.

### Water

- **Water supply information** - The Board is developing an information base about the water supplies in the region to assist it 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 and aquifer reserves.
- **Watershed approach** - There is an increased awareness regarding the





need to adopt a watershed-based approach to water supply management and one that looks at water & liquid waste as one interconnected system.

- **Funding** - There may be funding from senior governments available for innovative strategies.

## **Current Plans and Initiatives**

- The RDN currently has a number of plans and initiatives in place regarding utility systems including:
  - **Recently revised Solid Waste Management Plan;**
  - **Zero Waste Program;**
  - **Liquid Waste Management Plan;**
  - **Drinking Water Action Plan;** and
  - **Drinking Water / Watershed Protection Project** underway.

## **Strategic Goals and Actions for 2006-2009**

### **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. Support ongoing implementation of the Organics Waste Diversion Strategy for the region.
- d. Assess new treatment technologies for residual wastes that not only save landfill capacity but produce energy and provide economic opportunities for local industry at the Arboretum property.

#### **2. Develop a broader understanding and commitment in residential and commercial / industrial sectors to progressive waste management measures.**

- a. Enhance communications and public education on waste management, composting and recycling.

- b. Explore opportunities to encourage industry, municipalities and stakeholders to work together to develop a regional eco-industrial network, including possibly a pilot project, to reduce waste and increase economic performance by developing an eco-industrial park that includes turning wastes into resources.

## **Liquid waste**

### **3. Continue to improve the quality of treated liquid waste in the region to reduce risks and impacts.**

- a. Continue to pursue secondary treatment at all facilities, and examine the implications of tertiary treatment, including exploring options to maximize the effective re-use of biosolids.
- b. Develop effective options for liquid waste treatment for the Village Centres in the electoral areas.
- c. Develop a strategy for responding to requests to provide community services to land outside the Urban Containment Boundary in electoral areas for the purpose of addressing environmental or public health concerns.

## **Water**

### **4. Develop clarity on the region's water supply capacity and its extent to accommodate growth.**

- a. Explore a potential study of water resources in the region in association with the Regional Growth Strategy, with special attention to areas under significant development pressure.
- b. Complete the Drinking Water / Watershed Protection Project for the electoral areas.

### **5. 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.
- b. Explore options for water use restrictions to decrease use in domestic and commercial / industrial uses during seasons when water supply is especially limited.
- c. Consider innovative options for water supply, including recycling and re-use where appropriate, and identify options for federal funding to support innovation.
- d. Continue with communication and educational initiatives, in conjunction with the municipalities and other stakeholders, to educate residents of the region on sustainable water and liquid waste practices.



## 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 currently has a number of plans and initiatives in place in this area including:
  - **The Regional Parks and Trails Plan;**
  - **The Oceanside Recreation Services Master Plan;**
  - **Area A Recreation and Cultural Services Master Plan;**
  - **Area A Community Trails Study;**
  - **Nanoose Bay Parks and Open Space Plan; and**
  - **Management plans for regional parks including Nanaimo River, Descanso Bay, Benson Creek Falls, and Horne Lake.**

### Strategic Goals and Actions for 2006-2009

- 1. Continue to pursue the acquisition of additional park land in the region.**
  - a. 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. Implement the park land acquisition strategy to identify high priority areas for acquisition, opportunities for funding support, and key partnerships. Integrate watershed protection objectives into this process.
  - d. Develop a strategy to use density bonusing, transfers or other tools to support the provision of park and open space amenities.

**2. Continue to promote innovative park plans and management practices.**

- a. Continue to incorporate leading edge practices in parks management, including minimizing the use of chemicals and irrigation where possible.
- b. Continue to ensure a diversity of parks, including those with both recreational and conservation objectives.
- c. Develop a parks programming strategy to enhance the recreational experience and opportunities in public space, 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. Develop and implement a plan that promotes parks and other regional amenities for tourism.

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

- a. Complete and implement the Electoral Area 'A' Recreation and Culture Service Master Plan
- b. Implement 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 demands for services.

This plan summarizes the focus, strategic directions and desired accomplishments for the current Board of Directors for the years of 2006, to the beginning of 2009, in continued pursuit of its vision and expression of its goal 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 many stakeholders together to build strong visions and find solutions to key challenges.

The goals and actions outlined in this plan are expected to have both short term and long term horizons, recognizing that some will take longer to achieve than others. Furthermore, these goals and actions have all been created with an eye to embedding the objectives of sustainable development at every level, in a pragmatic manner.

The RDN has taken a role of leadership amongst its peers in BC in pursuing sustainable approaches to growth and development in many areas, and remains committed to continuing along this path. The RDN believes that by pursuing sustainable community objectives, including community health, environmental protection and enhancement, and economic opportunities and jobs, they can most effectively prepare the region to prosper in the 21st century.

