

10.0 - Development Permit Areas

This section of the Official Community Plan identifies those areas of Electoral Area 'G' where the Regional Board may require a development permit, prior to the commencement of subdivision, development, redevelopment, construction, or land alteration on a property, pursuant to the *Local Government Act*. The designation of areas of land and water as Development Permit Areas in Electoral Area 'G' is consistent with the strategic goals and actions of the Regional District of Nanaimo Board Strategic Plan, the goals and objectives of the Regional Growth Strategy, and the community values of Plan Area residents.

Pursuant to Section 919.1 of the *Local Government Act*, Development Permit Areas shall be designated in this Official Community Plan for one or more of the following purposes:

1. protection of the natural environment, its ecosystems and biological diversity;
2. protection of development from hazardous conditions;
3. protection of farming;
4. revitalization of an area in which a commercial use is permitted;
5. establishment of objectives for the form and character of intensive residential development; and,
6. establishment of objectives for the form and character of commercial, industrial or multi-residential development.

For those areas designated as Development Permit Areas in the OCP, the Community Plan describes the special conditions or objectives that justify the designation, and the zoning bylaw¹⁹ specifies the guidelines respecting the manner by which the special conditions or objectives will be addressed.

¹⁹ Bylaw No. 1540.02, adopted December 4, 2018

10.1 Freshwater and Fish Habitat ²⁰

Designation:

The Freshwater and Fish Habitat Development Permit Area is shown on Map No. 9, and applies to the riparian assessment areas of mapped and unmapped streams subject to the *Riparian Areas Regulation (RAR)* of the *Riparian Areas Protection Act*, as well as all other mapped lakes, wetlands, ponds and watercourses not subject to the RAR. Specifically, the Development Permit Area is defined as follows:

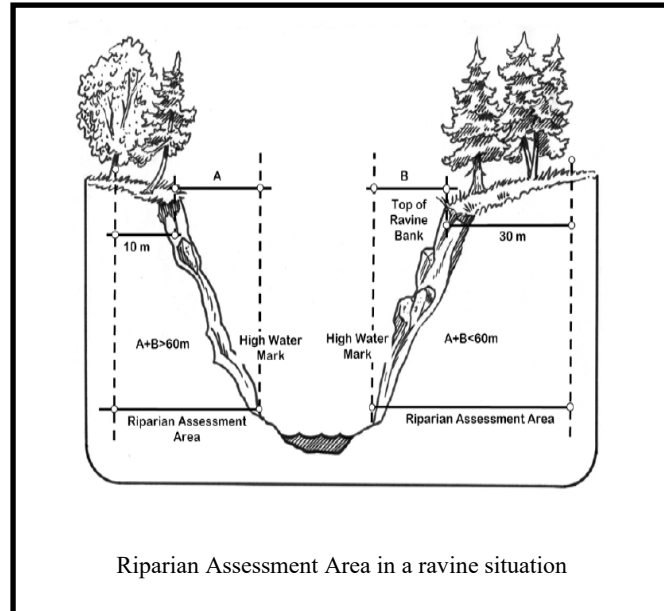
1. All mapped and unmapped riparian assessment areas as defined in the RAR as follows:
 - a) for a stream, a 30 metre strip on both sides of the stream measured from the high water mark;
 - b) for a ravine less than 60 metres wide, a strip on both sides of the stream measured from the high water mark to a point that is 30 metres beyond the top of the ravine bank; and
 - c) for a ravine 60 metres wide or greater, a strip on both sides of the stream measured from the high water mark to a point that is 10 metres beyond the top of the ravine bank.
2. All mapped watercourses, lakes, wetlands, and ponds, that are not subject to the RAR; 15 metres as measured from the natural boundary or top of ravine bank, whichever is greater. This includes estuarine areas (areas of tidal influence) of all watercourses and streams. For clarity, in estuarine areas the Marine Coast Development Permit Area also applies.

The following definitions are used for the purpose of defining the development permit area as above:

‘ravine’ means a narrow, steep-sided valley that is commonly eroded by running water and has a slope grade greater than 3:1.

‘stream’ includes any of the following that provides fish habitat:

- a) a watercourse, whether it usually contains water or not;
- b) a pond, lake, river, creek or brook; and
- c) a ditch, spring or wetland that is connected by surface flow to something referred to in paragraph a) or b).



²⁰ Bylaw No. 1540.02, adopted December 4, 2018

‘top of the ravine bank’ means the first significant break in a ravine slope where the break occurs such that the grade beyond the break is flatter than 3:1 for a minimum distance of 15 metres measured perpendicularly from the break, and the break does not include a bench within the ravine that could be developed.

Authority:

The Freshwater and Fish Habitat Development Permit Area is designated a development permit area for the protection of the natural environment, its ecosystems and biological diversity, and protection of development from hazardous conditions pursuant to Section 488(1)(a) and (b) of the *Local Government Act*.

Justification:

Freshwater and riparian ecosystems perform a number of valuable services to humans, plants and animals alike. They support a diversity of plants and animals, provide important refuges and migration routes for birds and wildlife, and support fish life processes. Vegetation in riparian areas moderates the volume and rate of water flowing through the watershed contributing to effective rainwater management and stabilizes stream banks by holding soil in place. Plant root systems enhance the soil’s ability to absorb water by making it more porous. This allows water to be stored and released slowly into the watercourse, reducing erosion and flooding. Soils also filter impurities and sediment from runoff water, improving water quality in the stream channel.

Riparian vegetation provides food and shelter for fish. Shade from trees within the riparian area regulates water temperatures within the stream, which is critical for salmon, trout and other fish species that need cool water to survive. Logs and other woody debris fall into streams from the riparian area, influencing stream channel morphology, dissipating the stream’s natural erosive energy and providing habitat for a diverse range of species. Erosion of banks and steep slopes can also pose a hazard to development, and maintaining and enhancing natural features and vegetation and siting buildings and structure appropriately, can reduce this hazard.

Land use practices including land clearing, road building, construction of buildings and structures, and location of wastewater disposal systems in or near riparian areas can jeopardize these habitats and water quality. Protection of riparian vegetation and watercourses is therefore necessary to protect the natural environment, ecosystems and biological diversity of the Plan Area. Land use practices can also change the hydraulic flow of a stream and create or exacerbate a flooding hazard.

Furthermore, the Province of British Columbia’s *Riparian Areas Protection Act*, requires that local governments establish regulations to protect riparian areas, and not allow development to proceed until the requirements of the RAR are met.

The objectives of this development permit area are:

1. To protect freshwater ecosystems to maintain their natural habitat and environmental quality.
2. To restore freshwater ecosystems to improve their natural habitat and environmental and hazard mitigation quality if they have been previously degraded.
3. To protect riparian areas from development so that the areas can provide natural features, functions and conditions that support fish life processes.
4. To protect development from flood and slope hazard.

10.2 Sensitive Ecosystems²¹

Designation:

The Sensitive Ecosystems Development Permit Area is shown on Map No. 9 and applies to all parcels containing 'sparsely vegetated', and 'older forest' sensitive ecosystems mapped in the Provincial SEI: East Vancouver Island and Gulf Islands 1993 – 1997 and updated in 2004.

Purpose:

The Sensitive Ecosystems Development Permit Area is designated a development permit area for the protection of the natural environment, its ecosystems and biological diversity pursuant to Section 488(1)(a) of the *Local Government Act*.

Justification:

Increasing development pressure and environmental awareness, as well as the Regional Growth Strategy's goal of environmental protection has led to the need for the protection of the Plan Area's most sensitive environmentally significant features to ensure their continued survival and enjoyment for generations to come.

The objective of the development permit area is to minimize the impacts of developments on environmentally sensitive features, ecosystems or habitat.

10.3 Marine Coast²²

Designation:

The Marine Coast Development Permit Area is shown on Map No. 9 and applies within a 15 metre horizontal distance upland from the present natural boundary and within 15 metres horizontal distance seaward of the present natural boundary. In estuarine areas, it applies upstream, both on land and water, to the extent of tidal influence. For clarity, in estuarine areas the Freshwater and Fish Habitat Development Permit Area also applies.

Purpose:

The Marine Coast Development Permit Area is designated a development permit area for the protection of the natural environment, its ecosystems and biological diversity, and protection of development from hazardous conditions pursuant to Section 488(1)(a) and (b) of the *Local Government Act*.

²¹ Bylaw No. 1540.02, adopted December 4, 2018

²² Bylaw No. 1540.02, adopted December 4, 2018

Justification:

The coastal zone is one of the prime features of the natural environment of the Plan Area and includes recreational beaches, sheltered embayed areas and sensitive estuaries at the mouth of the Little Qualicum and Englishman Rivers as well as French and Morningstar Creeks. The coastal zone also includes shoreline, which may be susceptible to erosion or flooding in some areas.

The Plan Area contains one of only 28 provincially approved wildlife management areas. The Parksville–Qualicum Beach Wildlife Management Area (PQBWMA) encompasses 1,024 hectares of coastal foreshore, estuary, and river habitat between Craig Bay and the Little Qualicum River including land adjacent to the Englishman River. The PQBWMA includes most of the coastal shoreline in the Plan Area and a portion of the Englishman River. It contains a diversity of ecosystems and animal communities that are sensitive to development and human disturbance, including a significant migration of brant geese that stop to rest and feed within this area each spring.

The objectives of this development permit area are:

1. To work towards the ‘protection of the environment’ goal of the Regional Growth Strategy, in particular by following the policy to ‘minimize impacts of development in coastal zones by ensuring use of low impact development’.
2. To plan and regulate new development in a manner that preserves, protects and restores the long-term physical integrity and ecological values of shorelines and associated foreshore and upland areas.
3. To balance development opportunities with the ecological conservation and restoration of the shoreline environment.
4. To maintain the public’s safe use and access to these important recreation areas in a way that does not compromise the ecological integrity of the shoreline.

10.4 Eagle and Heron Nesting Trees²³**Designation:**

The Eagle and Heron Nesting Trees Development Permit Area is shown on Map No. 9. The development permit area is defined as follows:

- a) For **Bald Eagle Nesting Trees** – the development permit area applies to all mapped and unmapped trees containing bald eagle nests and is a 60 metre radius measured from the base of the nesting tree.
- b) For Great Blue Heron Nesting Trees – the development permit area applies to all mapped and unmapped trees containing great blue heron nests, and shall be:
 - i. a 60 metre radius from the base of the nesting tree on lots 1.0 hectare or smaller; and
 - ii. a 100 metre radius from the base of the nesting tree on lots larger than 1.0 hectare.

Where the colony consists of more than one tree, the radius is measured from a line drawn around the outer perimeter of the base of all nest trees.

The locations of the eagle and heron nesting trees identified on Map No. 9 of this plan are intended to provide an approximate location only. Ground-truthing may be required by Regional

²³ Bylaw No. 1540.02, adopted December 4, 2018

District staff, a Registered Professional Biologist, or British Columbia Land Surveyor, to accurately determine the location of the tree or trees.

Authority:

The Eagle and Heron Nesting Trees Development Permit Area is designated a development permit area for protection of the natural environment, its ecosystems and biological diversity, pursuant to Section 488(1)(a) of the *Local Government Act*.

Justification:

Nesting birds such as the Great Blue Heron and Bald Eagle are sensitive to impact from development and disturbance by human activity and require special treatment in order to protect their ecological value, now and for the future.

Pacific Great Blue Herons are a Species of Special Concern in Canada and are Blue-listed in British Columbia. There are only about 500 nests on Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands. Bald Eagles are territorial and generally require 1000 meters between nesting sites. Both species nest near lakes, rivers and shorelines throughout BC where they are close to their food source. The loss of available nesting habitat near their food source, as well as disturbance from human presence, reduces the birds' ability to thrive and successfully raise their young. While Section 34 of the *Wildlife Act* provides for the protection of Bald Eagles and Pacific Great Blue Herons and several other at risk bird species, this development permit area protects the nesting habitat essential to ensuring breeding populations are maintained.

The objectives of this development permit area are:

1. To implement Regional Growth Strategy Policy 2.14 to protect environmentally sensitive areas from the impacts of development.
2. To protect eagle and heron nesting sites from the impacts of development.

10.5 Aquifers²⁴

Authority:

The Aquifers Development Permit Area is designated a development permit area for the protection of the natural environment, its ecosystems and biological diversity, pursuant to Section 488(1)(a) of the *Local Government Act*.

Designation:

The Aquifers Development Permit Area is shown on Map No. 9 and applies to parcels within the growth containment boundary or industrial lands where non-residential development is supported.

Justification:

Aquifers are sensitive to impact from development and disturbance by human activity and require special treatment in order to protect their ecological value, and community value as a drinking water source now and for the future.

Aquifers and surface water are connected and interact with each other as typically, surface waters recharge aquifers in months with precipitation and snow melt. The groundwater system contributes to baseflow in rivers and streams, maintaining habitat for fish, wildlife and plants and

²⁴ Bylaw No. 1540.02, adopted December 4, 2018

is the sole domestic water supply for many residents. Maintaining both water quality and quantity requires careful management for the long-term sustainability of ecosystems and drinking water values.

The Plan Area intersects eight different mapped aquifers and contains the lower reaches of three major water regions (Little Qualicum River, French Creek, Englishman River). This results in varying aquifer and watershed conditions, characteristics and contexts. Vulnerability of mapped aquifers to surface contamination is generally high. For the most part, the mapped aquifers that underlie the Plan Area are moderately producing sand and gravel that are subject to moderate demand. These aquifer areas are drinking water sources for domestic well owners and customers of water services areas including EPCOR French Creek, Town of Qualicum Beach, City of Parksville and four RDN Water Service Areas: Surfside, French Creek, San Pareil, and Englishman River Community.

Care must be taken in construction methods, excavation, surface drainage, storage, handling and manufacture and use of products on parcels of land within this Development Permit Area to avoid contamination of the underlying aquifer and to protect and promote its sustainable use as a drinking water source.

The objective of this development permit area is to implement Regional Growth Strategy Policy 2.14 to protect groundwater aquifers and environmentally sensitive areas from contamination and reduced supply caused by land use and development activities.

10.6 River Flood and Slope Hazard^{25 26}

Designation:

The River Flood and Slope Hazard Development Permit Area is applicable to flood prone lands and those lands within the Plan Area with a natural grade greater than 30 percent as identified on Map No. 9. With respect to steep slopes west of the Little Qualicum River, this Development Permit Area applies to lands within 15 metres from the top of the bank where the natural grade of the slope is greater than 30 percent.

Authority:

The River Flood and Slope Hazard Development Permit Area is designated a development permit area for protection of the natural environment, its ecosystems and biological diversity and for the protection of development from hazardous conditions, pursuant to Section 488(1)(a) and (b) of the *Local Government Act*.

Justification:

Hazardous lands include steep slopes adjacent to watercourses and along the coastal shoreline and flood prone lands. The subdivision, development of land, or removal of vegetation in these areas may destabilize the area, cause environmental damage, and pose potential for loss of life and property. In response to these risks and conditions, the objective of this Development Permit Area is to protect life, property and the environment from hazardous conditions.

²⁵ Bylaw No. 1540.02, adopted December 4, 2018

²⁶ Bylaw No. 1540.06, adopted October 8, 2024

10.7 Farmland Protection²⁷

Designation:

The Farmland Protection Development Permit Area is shown on Map No. 10 and applies to all properties adjacent to the Provincial Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) boundary.

Authority:

The Farmland Protection Development Permit Area is designated a development permit area for the protection of farming, pursuant to Section 488(1)(c) of the *Local Government Act*.

Justification:

The BC Agricultural Land Commission has acknowledged that the development of lands adjoining farmlands may compromise the agricultural use of the ALR lands. Agricultural lands therefore require protection for long-term agricultural use.

In addition, as a result of inappropriately designed developments, land use conflicts may develop between the land uses. The incorporation of a 15 metre wide buffer between developed lands and agricultural lands is expected to promote greater compatibility between the uses while protecting the agricultural uses from urban impacts.

The objective of this Development Permit Area is to protect the agricultural land resource of the Plan Area for present and future production of food and other agricultural products.

10.8 Inland Island Highway Corridor²⁸

Purpose:

To establish objectives and provide guidelines in the zoning bylaw²⁹ for the visual form and character of industrial, commercial, intensive residential, and multi-residential lands which may be visible from the Inland Island Highway (Highway 19) and the interchanges with Highways 4 and 4A.

Area:

This Development Permit Area is applicable to all land within 250 metres from the centre line of the Inland Island Highway and within 500 metres from the centre point of an intersection or interchange of the Inland Island Highway. See Map No. 10 (Development Permit Areas: Form & Character, Inland Highway Corridor, and Farmland Protection).³⁰

²⁷ Bylaw No. 1540.02, adopted December 4, 2018

²⁸ Bylaw No. 1540.02, adopted December 4, 2018

²⁹ Bylaw No. 1540.02, adopted December 4, 2018

³⁰ Bylaw No. 1540.02, adopted December 4, 2018

Justification:

The Inland Island Highway Development Permit Area provides guidelines for the form and character of industrial and commercial uses and related activities in order to reduce undesirable visual impact on the Inland Island Highway and the gateway lands surrounding major interchange connections.

10.9 Multi Residential, Intensive Residential, Industrial, and Commercial Form and Character***Purpose:***³¹

To establish objectives ³²for the form and character of multi residential, intensive residential, industrial, and commercial development; and.

To protect the natural environment, its ecosystems and biological diversity.

In the context of this Development Permit Area, form and character refers to the external façade and architecture of the built environment, landscaping, internal traffic flow including pedestrian and cyclist, site illumination and signage, and site layout.

Area:³³

This Development Permit Area is applicable to all lands shown on Map No. 10 (Development Permit Areas: Form & Character, Island Highway Corridor, and Farmland Protection) identified by this Plan.

Justification:

Increasing development pressure has led to the need to ensure that new developments and redevelopment on lands designated for multi residential, intensive residential, industrial, and commercial are conducted in a manner that is: compatible with the servicing standards in the Plan Area, the City of Parksville, and the Town of Qualicum Beach and to ensure that developments are aesthetically pleasing and compatible with the surrounding land uses, and minimize the impact on the environment.

10.10 Coastal Flood Hazard Development Permit Area³⁴***Designation of Applicable Area***

Those parts of Electoral Area G of the Regional District of Nanaimo designated as the Coastal Flood Hazard Development Permit Area on Map No. 11 of the Official Community Plan, applying to areas that are at risk of flood hazards.

³¹ Bylaw No. 1540.02, adopted December 4, 2018

³² Bylaw No. 1540.02, adopted December 4, 2018

³³ Bylaw No. 1540.02, adopted December 4, 2018

³⁴ Bylaw No. 1540.06, adopted October 8, 2024

Authority Granted Under the Local Government Act

These areas are designated as a development permit area to establish guidelines to protect development from hazardous conditions pursuant to sections 488(1)(a) & (b) of the *Local Government Act*.

Justification

Coastal communities are vulnerable to acute hazards like storm surge and coastal flooding to the widespread impacts of coastal erosion and sea level rise. These hazards can pose a risk to infrastructure, property and public safety, and can disrupt local economies and cause ecological damage unless mitigated. Coastal hazards and sea level rise are critical considerations for regions with a lengthy coastline.

The Regional District of Nanaimo is preparing for the impacts of climate change through the *Sea Level Rise and Climate Adaptation Program*. In 2022, the Coastal Floodplain Mapping Project was completed resulting in a better understanding of coastal flood hazards under present-day and future conditions. The flood analysis included the cumulative effects of high-tide, storm surge, wind and wave effect. The project also resulted in the production of regional-scale Regulatory Coastal Floodplain Maps used for designating the coastal floodplain area. The purpose of this development permit area is to ensure new development responds to coastal flood hazards by reducing the risk to people and property, and existing buildings are not altered or modified in ways that increase flood risk.

Objectives

The objectives of this development permit area are to:

1. minimize the risk to people and property from flood hazards;
2. encourage safety in construction, location and the manner of new construction in flood prone areas;
3. ensure new development does not increase flood hazards and mitigates flood risks for surrounding properties;
4. minimize the potential for damage to public infrastructure, facilities and utilities;
5. ensure lands are safe for the intended use;
6. preserve the natural environment and ecological functions of floodplains; and
7. increase awareness of designated floodplain areas and the implications of such a designation.