

News Release

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Harmonized Official Community Plan for Electoral Areas adopted, enabling next phase of modernization to begin

DUNCAN, BC – A multi-year, community-building effort concluded last month when the Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD) Board officially adopted the [Official Community Plan for Electoral Areas](#) (Bylaw 4270) creating a single guiding document for the nine unincorporated communities of the Cowichan region.

“With the adoption of this harmonized OCP, we are stronger as a region to confront the many forces confronting all corners of the Cowichan,” said Lori Iannidinardo, Chair of the Electoral Area Services Committee and Director of Area D – Cowichan Bay. “I am incredibly proud of my fellow Directors, CVRD staff, our Advisory Planning Commissions and the many residents who all worked together to achieve this common goal and steer our collective Cowichan communities towards a brighter future.”

The electoral areas of the CVRD were formerly guided by seven distinct Official Community Plans (OCP), making it difficult for developers, residents and CVRD planners to navigate the development application process, and ultimately leading to inequity between the various areas. Combined with the recent pressures of growth, climate change, water scarcity and economic development, the electoral areas required a central master plan to ensure future development can be done in a consistent and efficient approach by all parties.

“This nine electoral area OCP is historic for the CVRD as a community and an organization,” said Ian Morrison, Director of Area F – Cowichan Lake South/Skutz Falls. “It will foster better decisions on growth, environment and climate change, and quality of life for our future generations. All who read it will benefit from its improved clarity, transparency and fairness.”

The [Official Community Plan for the Electoral Areas](#) is the first of its kind for a regional district in British Columbia, resolving a history of fragmented development and decision making outside of the four established municipalities within the region. In addition to creating a single OCP, the number of development permit areas (DPA) was reduced from 44 to 13, and the entire region was re-mapped by the CVRD Geographical Information Services staff to reflect this update.

“One of the aims of this new plan is to act as an efficient guide for new developments, and to strike a balance between accommodating the influx of new residents and the concerns and expectations of our existing residents,” said Klaus Kuhn, Director of Area I – Youbou/Meade Creek.

The process of harmonizing the existing OCPs into a single document began in earnest in 2019, with intense, internal work by the professional planners of the CVRD Community Planning division. Once in draft form, the HOCP underwent several rounds of in-person and virtual public engagement opportunities, in addition to fulsome review and consideration by the members of each electoral area [Advisory Planning Commission](#).

“I was impressed by how the feedback from our respective advisory planning commissions was incorporated into this document,” said Ben Maartman, Director of Area H – North Oyster/Diamond. “The process has built a relationship of mutual respect between the CVRD and our APC, which is so important as we move forward working together to achieve the best outcomes for our community.”

The new OCP is now available in PDF format along with the new map data accessible on the interactive [CVRD Web Map](#). Going forward, all development applications will now be considered under this new framework and not under the previous electoral area-specific OCPs.

“COVID played a role in creating additional challenges over the past 20 months, and we are thankful to the tireless work of CVRD staff to meet these challenges and keep moving forward,” said Lynne Smith, Director of Area G – Saltair/Gulf Islands. “The Saltair community is looking forward to moving into the second phase – modernization – in the near future.”

With the adoption of the harmonized OCP, the CVRD will continue work towards the modernization of this Official Community Plan to ensure it reflects the most modern, best practices of local government, and incorporates even more of the desires of Cowichan region residents.

“We’ve had a three-year lead-up to this point, and we’ve been listening to you throughout this process, giving us confidence to move forward with a modernization in 2022,” said Coralie Breen, Senior Planner for the Cowichan Valley Regional District. “Throughout our engagement process we heard a great deal that went beyond our work towards harmonization. But of course we want to hear from you again, particularly around our draft growth containment boundaries, which are critical to planning a well-designed, resilient community.”

– 30 –

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