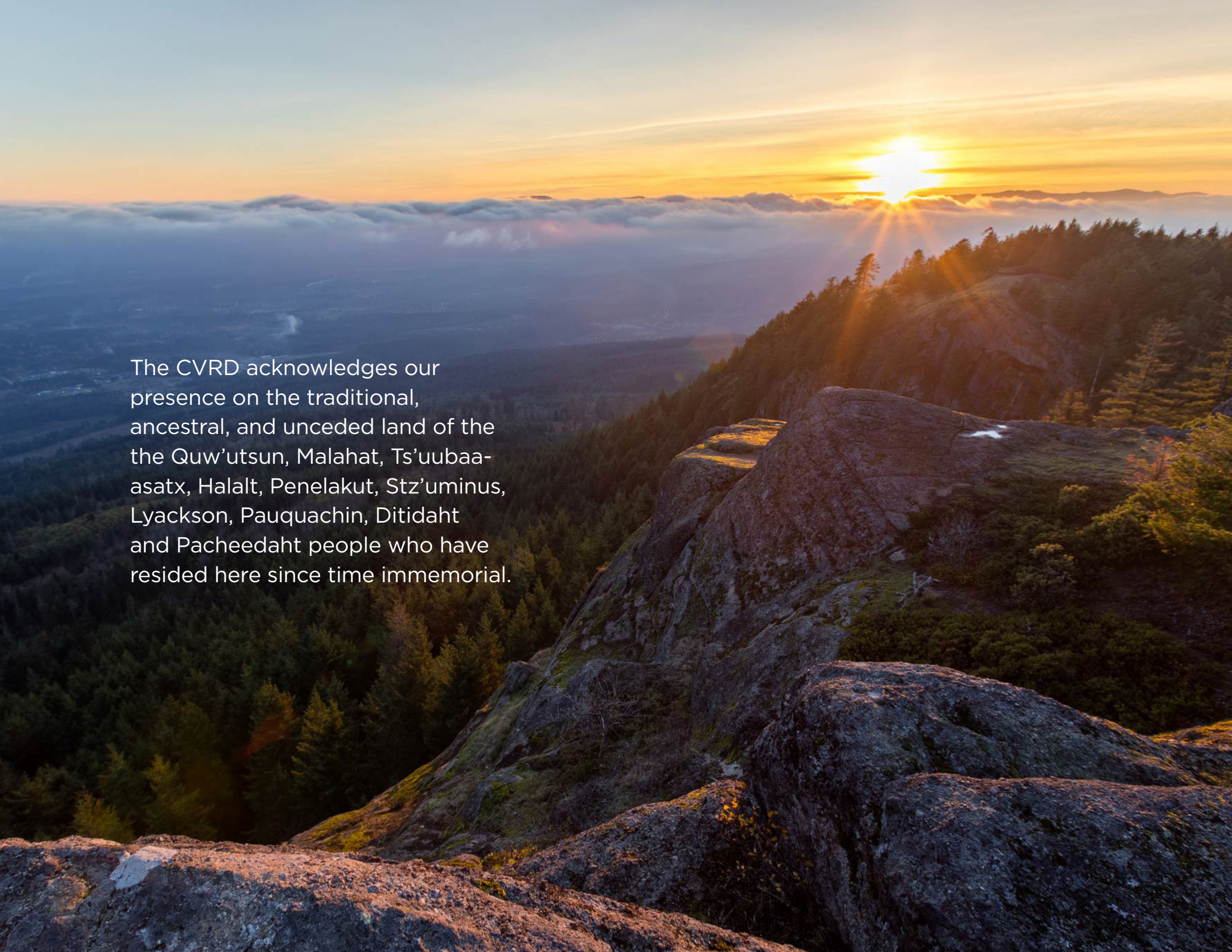




Cowichan Valley Regional District

STRATEGIC PLAN 2023-2026

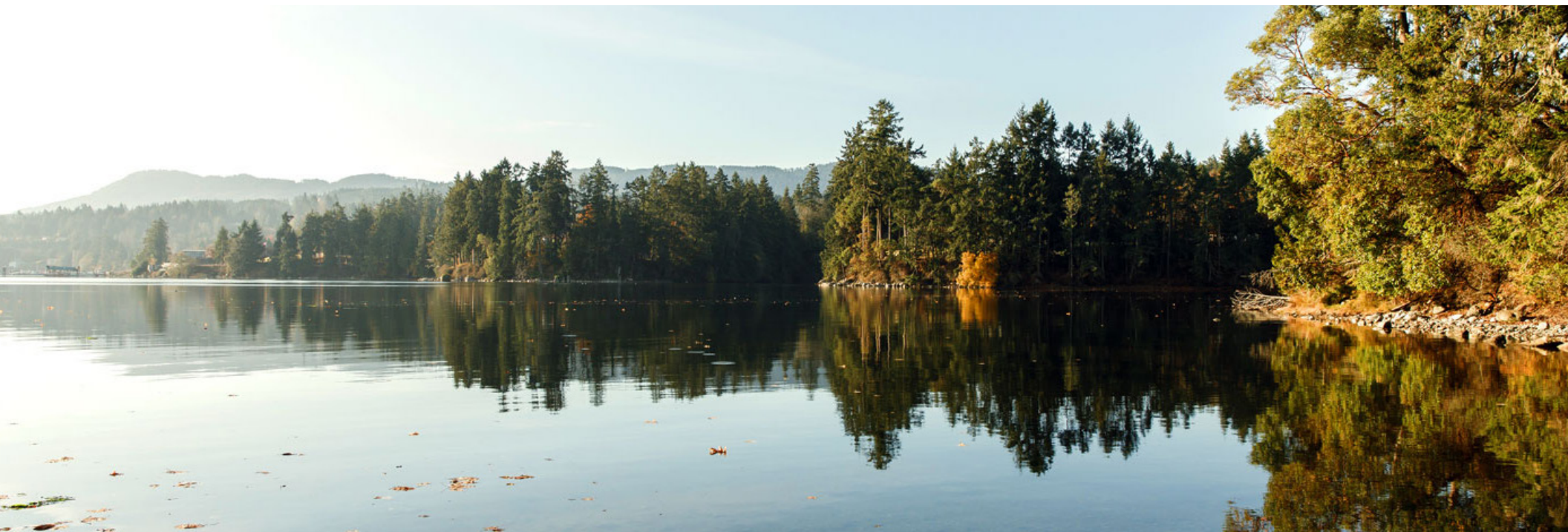




The CVRD acknowledges our presence on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded land of the the Quw'utsun, Malahat, Ts'uubaa-asatx, Halalt, Penelakut, Stz'uminus, Lyackson, Pauquachin, Ditidaht and Pacheedaht people who have resided here since time immemorial.

Table of Contents

4	Message from the Chair & Board
5	The Regional Board 2023-2026
6	Cowichan Valley Regional District: Electoral Areas and Member Municipalities
7	The Regional District
9	Vision, Mission & Guiding Principles
11	Regional Opportunities and Challenges
15	Themes



Message from the Chair & Board

I'm pleased to introduce the Cowichan Valley Regional District 2023–2026 Strategic Plan on behalf of the CVRD Board of Directors. This plan outlines our vision and goals for the next three years, guiding service delivery across the Cowichan region in a sustainable, equitable, and fiscally responsible manner.

The strategic objectives, aligned with Cowichan 2050, emphasize the CVRD's commitment to Reconciliation. Strengthening relationships with Indigenous communities is integral to our commitment to learning, listening, and collaborating in the journey of reconciliation.

We acknowledge that our residents are facing a rapidly changing climate, insufficient housing, public health emergency, and infrastructure strain in addition to significant financial struggle. Our commitment is to *act* to the full extent of our power as a local government and to *advocate* with provincial ministries for supportive policies and resources to enhance our community's resilience amidst these intersectional crises experienced today.

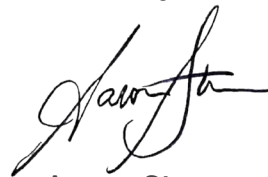
Collaboration with municipalities, First Nations, and stakeholders is vital. Examples include Emergency Management Cowichan and support for the Cowichan Watershed Board's initiatives with the Province, Cowichan Tribes, and Catalyst Paper Excellence.

Focusing on the region's future economy, we advocate for a pragmatic infrastructure investment model, business community support, and innovation to attract new opportunities.

Efforts to streamline land use and development services are underway, emphasizing efficiency and strong support for developments aligning with our plan and meeting public engagement requirements.

I extend gratitude to my fellow Directors and CVRD staff for their dedication to this plan. Our early working relationships, empathy, and generosity position us well to address the region's challenges ahead.

Sincerely,



Aaron Stone
Chair

The Regional Board 2023-2026

The Cowichan Valley Regional District sits on the traditional, unceded territories of the Quw'utsun, Malahat, Ts'uubaa-asatx, Halalt, Penelakut, Stz'uminus, Lyackson, Pauquachin, Ditidaht and Pacheedaht peoples. The region covers an area of 3,473 km² on Vancouver Island and the Southern Gulf Islands, between Malahat/Mill Bay and North Oyster. On the western edge of the region is the Pacific Ocean on the eastern edge is the Salish Sea. More than 89,000 people live in the region's four municipalities and nine electoral areas.

REGIONAL BOARD MEMBERS

Kate Segall (Vice Chair)
Area A: Mill Bay/Malahat

Sierra Acton
Area B: Shawnigan Lake

Mike Wilson
Area C: Cobble Hill

Hilary Abbott
Area D: Cowichan Bay

Alison Nicholson
Area E: Cowichan Station/
Sahtlam/Glenora

Ian Morrison
Area F: Cowichan Lake
South/Skutz Falls

Jesse McClinton
Area G: Saltair/Gulf Islands

Ben Maartman
Area H: North Oyster/Diamond

Karen Deck
Area I: Youbou/Meade Creek

Tim McGonigle
Town of Lake Cowichan

Aaron Stone (Chair)
Town of Ladysmith

Michelle Staples
City of Duncan

Rob Douglas
Municipality of North Cowichan

Debra Toporowski
Municipality of North Cowichan

Chris Istace
Municipality of North Cowichan

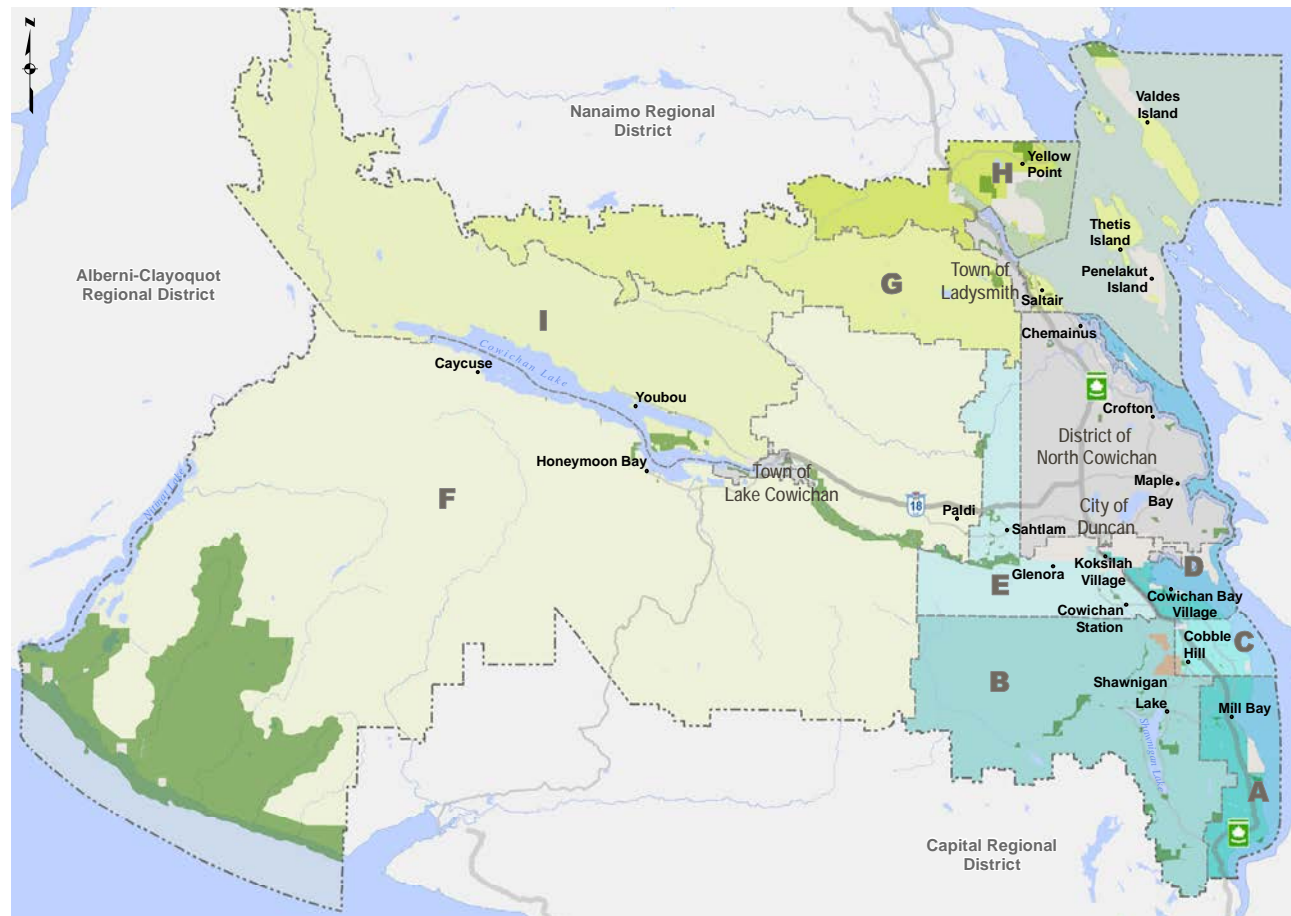
Christopher Justice
Municipality of North Cowichan



Cowichan Valley Regional District: Electoral Areas and Member Municipalities

The Cowichan Valley Regional District is adjacent to the Regional District of Nanaimo to the north, the Capital Regional District to the south, and the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District to the west.

Key economic industries in the region include: farming, fishing, forestry and tourism industries.



The Regional District

Governance

The CVRD is governed by nine elected directors from the nine electoral areas and appointed directors from the four municipalities: the Town of Lake Cowichan, the Town of Ladysmith, the City of Duncan, and the Municipality of North Cowichan. The CVRD Board elects a Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson annually.

Services

The Regional District provides a broad range of services to its residents. While a small number of these services are mandated by the Province (solid waste, emergency planning, land use planning electoral areas), the majority of services provided by the CVRD are determined by the Board with the approval of the electors who will receive them.

The services provided by CVRD can be regional, sub-regional or local, for example:

REGIONAL

solid waste management, emergency communications (9-1-1), emergency management, general government, asset management, administration, economic development, environmental services, regional parks, recreation centres, capital financing for hospitals.

SUB-REGIONAL

land use planning, bylaw enforcement, building inspection, parks, transit.

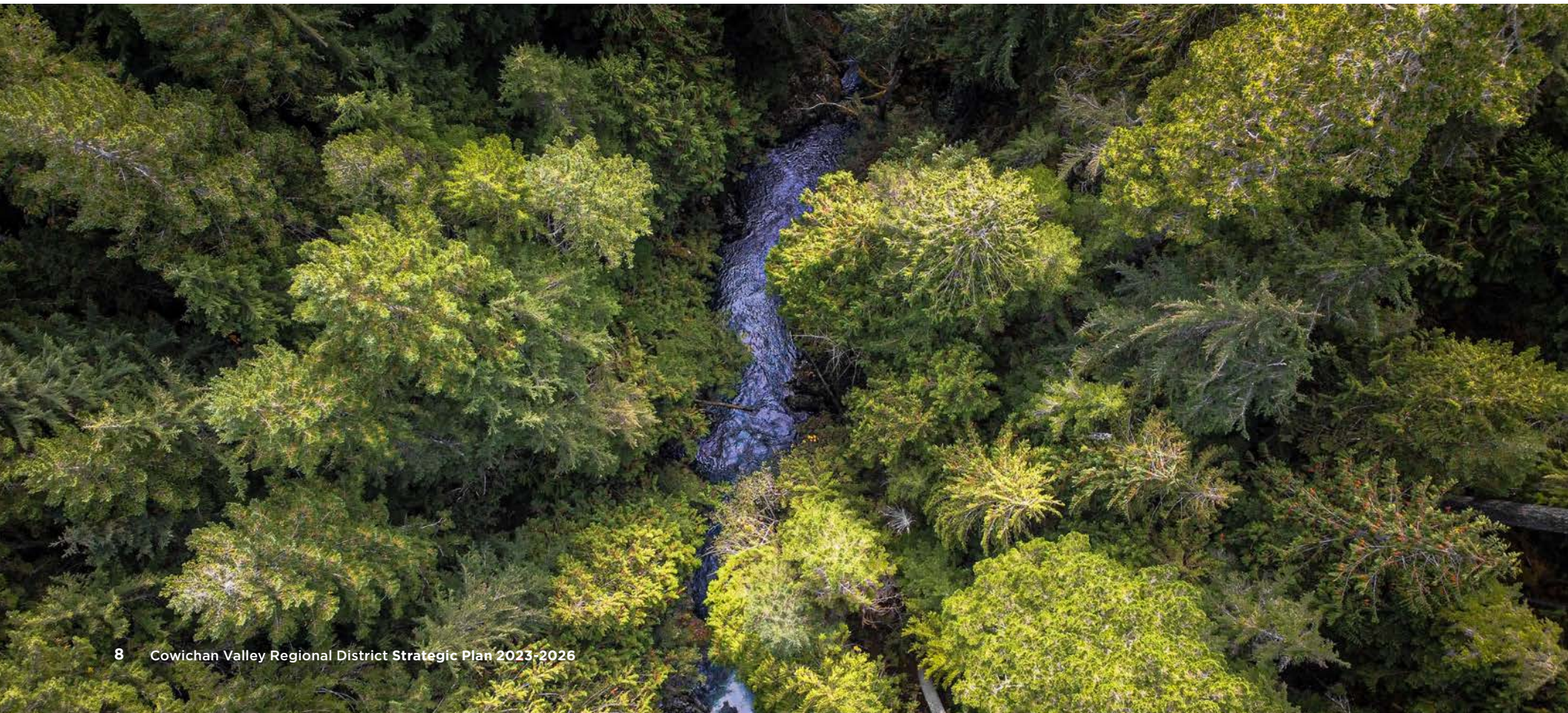
LOCAL

fire protection, water and wastewater systems, community parks, streetlights.



Funding

Funds required to operate the various regional district services are generated through property taxes, fees and charges, grants and donations, with reserve funds used strategically for operational and capital expenses when needed. Unlike municipalities, regional districts are required to match the costs and benefits of its services to the residents that benefit from them; this means residents pay for the services they receive.



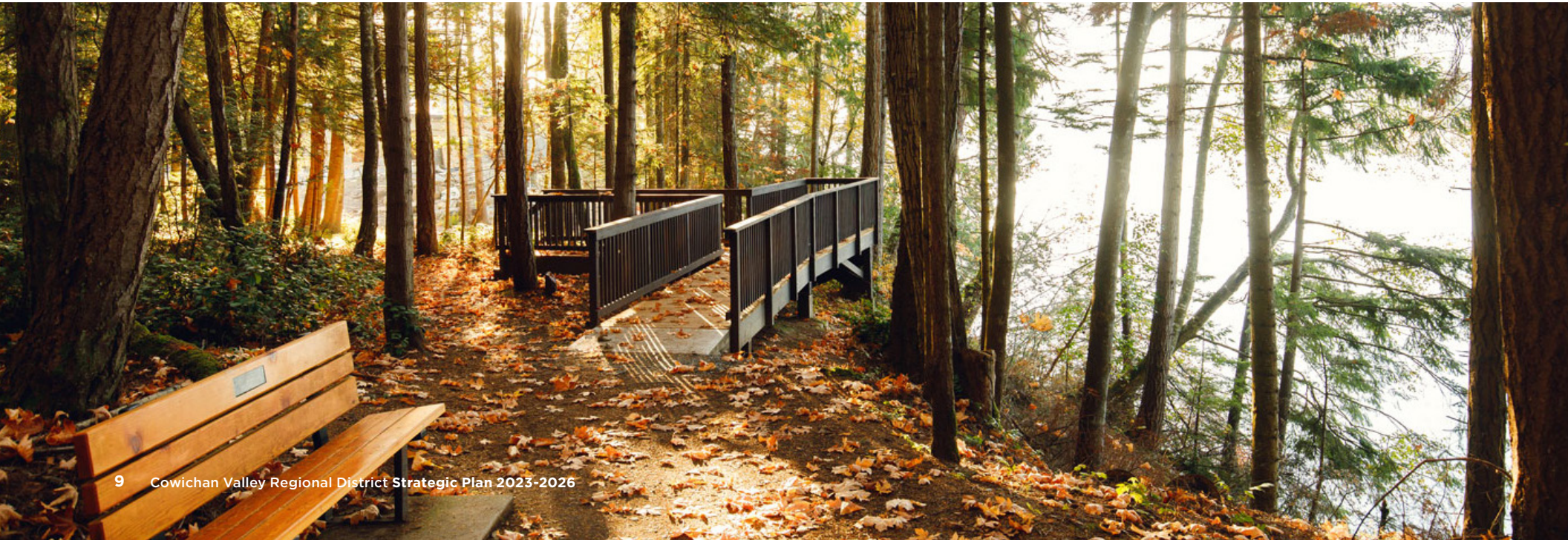
Vision, Mission & Guiding Principles

Vision

The Cowichan Valley is a diverse collection of vibrant, liveable, and healthy communities, working together to serve the public good, plan for the future, and help build a liveable, sustainable and resilient region. Cowichan is a region where all residents are included and have access to a quality of life that is fulfilling for them, where there is an abundance of social and economic opportunities and where there is a healthy environment for current and future generations.

Mission

The CVRD meets the current and future generations' needs of the Cowichan region and its communities through cooperative leadership, collaboration, innovation, and service excellence.

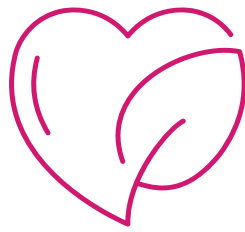


Our Organizational Values



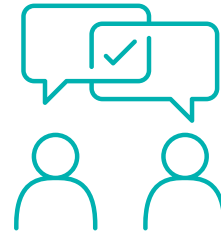
Engagement Focused:

We seek and appreciate public participation and incorporate the feedback we receive in our decision-making



Respectful:

We respect our people, our land, and our diversity



Collaborative:

We achieve more through collaboration and cooperation



Accountable:

We are accountable to our communities and residents for the prudent use of public funds



Service-Driven:

We provide efficient, effective, responsive professional service



Supportive Work Environment:

We promote and facilitate a healthy workplace and are an employer of choice



Inclusive:

We welcome diversity, equity and inclusion

Regional Opportunities and Challenges

Four Guiding Aspirations, developed by the regional community as part of the Cowichan 2050 exercise, underlie the regional vision and inform the Board's choice of strategic objectives. These Guiding Aspirations reflect our analysis of opportunities and challenges in the region.



Relationships

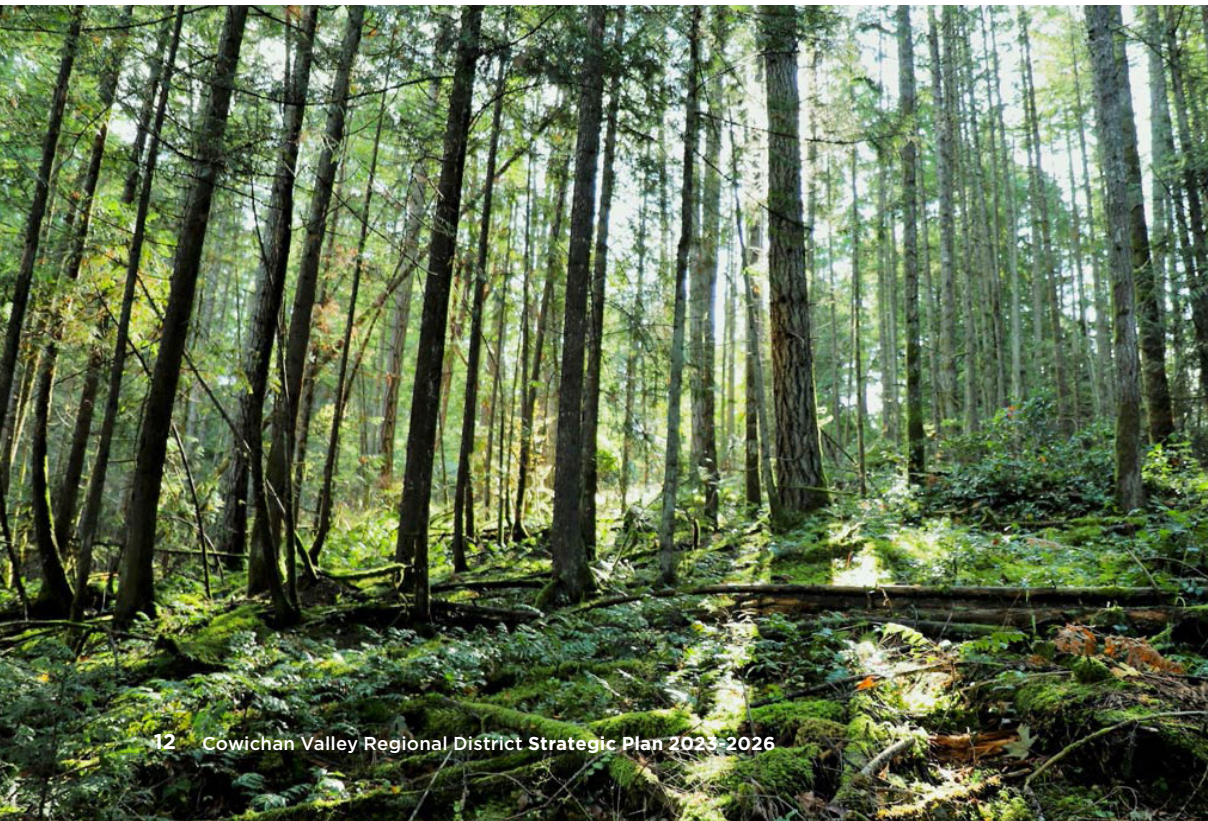
Build strong, inclusive relationships.

Social belonging and engagement are key components of community well-being. These concepts are alive and well in Cowichan, which is home to hundreds of active volunteer-led organization and strong arts, culture, and heritage sectors. Efforts are needed, however, to improve diversity, inclusivity, and social equity. There is a need, as well, to build stronger relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians through the ongoing journey of reconciliation and to weave a reconciliation approach throughout the business of the CVRD.

Sustainability

Make our region more sustainable.

The Cowichan Region is experiencing steady population growth and we anticipate that growth pressures will continue to be a significant factor over the coming decades. Growth pressures will be exacerbated by impacts associated with climate change, placing further stress on watersheds, ecosystems, food systems, and communities. Within this context, supporting sustainable, coordinated growth that facilitates continued environmental stewardship is a cornerstone goal for our region.



Livability

Keep our region livable.

Our region is one of the most livable places in Canada. We boast a temperate climate, a vibrant and prosperous economy, incredible outdoor recreation opportunities, high quality community services, excellent infrastructure, and so much more. In part because of our appeal, we are experiencing an influx of newcomers which is placing upward pressure on the cost of housing and food. Our challenge will be to maintain and improve livability in the face of growth. We need to tackle housing affordability and manage growth so that our communities retain the qualities that make them special. We need to ensure that our built environment supports the health and wellbeing of all residents.





Resilience

Strengthen our adaptive capacity.

Our region is dealing with chronic stresses related to affordability, economic volatility, and water supply. In the coming years, we anticipate additional challenges in the form of an aging population and a rise in sea level. As climate change accelerates, we also expect to become more exposed to sudden, acute shocks such as coastal flooding and frequent, intense storms. We must improve our region's resilience by strengthening the adaptive capacity of our communities. We need to work together to identify and address our vulnerabilities proactively so that we can survive and thrive no matter what stresses and shocks come our way.

Themes

Five themes, adapted from the Cowichan 2050 regional vision document, are used to organize the Board's strategic objectives and supporting actions. A sixth theme, Reconciliation, has been added, to reflect the CVRD's commitment to advancing reconciliation in the region. It is important to acknowledge that reconciliation actions are intended to be woven throughout all objectives of the Strategic Plan, but, given its importance, it is also highlighted as a standalone strategic goal.

All 6 themes are interconnected. The objectives and actions pursued under each particular theme will contribute to efforts and help to achieve successes under the other themes.



Reconciliation

Building stronger relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians through the ongoing journey of reconciliation (Cowichan 2050 p. 17)



Our Commitments

Honour our commitments to Smart Growth management, meaningful community engagement, and significant climate action.



Our Livelihoods

Create opportunities to build economic prosperity in our communities and for all of our residents across the entire region.



Our Communities

Work to enhance the livability of our communities for residents of all backgrounds and income levels.



Our Environment

Commit to protecting our natural assets and diverse ecosystems for the benefit of the entire region, including its natural environment, and the current and future generations of people who choose to live here.



Our Infrastructure

Work within our financial means to provide and maintain the infrastructure systems required to meet the needs of our communities.

CVRD Strategic Priorities 2023-2026

Reconciliation



Building stronger relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians through the ongoing journey of reconciliation. (Cowichan 2050 p. 17)

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1 To support efforts to strengthen cooperation, collaboration, and relationships between Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous in our communities.		
ACTIONS	BOARD	EAD*
1.1 Support community-led reconciliation and relationship building through engagement with First Nations	✓	
1.2 Support watershed governance and stewardship with local First Nations	✓	
1.3 Work with local First Nations to develop initiatives that support our shared environmental, social, economic, and governance goals	✓	
1.4 Develop an Indigenous relations framework to Integrate UNDRIP, DRIPA and implement Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action into our work at the CVRD	✓	

Our Commitments



Honour our commitments to meaningful community engagement, excellence in service delivery and significant climate action.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2 To serve, strengthen, and connect Cowichan communities through collaborative governance.		
ACTIONS	BOARD	EAD*
2.1 Recommit to Cowichan 2050 and hold a Board workshop in 2023 to better understand Regional Growth Strategies, then consider what policy to include in an update to the Strategic Plan by Q2 2024	✓	
2.2 Explore options for re-establishment of a Regional Planning function	✓	
2.3 Undertake a preliminary governance study for the southern Electoral Areas		✓
2.4 Enhance community engagement and responsiveness with a variety of strategies including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completing a communications and engagement strategy with a focus on climate readiness and adaptation, • Website improvements and public information campaigns to raise awareness of the CVRD and its services, and; • Public information meetings prior to public hearings 	✓	



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3 To promote climate action initiatives, reduce our own greenhouse gas emissions, and protect our communities from the adverse impacts of climate change.		
ACTIONS	BOARD	EAD*
WASTE AND GREENHOUSE GAS REDUCTION		
3.1 Identify, build support for, and act on additional initiatives across all of our services to reduce our wastes, cut our emissions, and minimize our overall footprint	✓	✓
ADAPTATION AND MITIGATION		
3.2 Complete the high priority items (1-4 years) of Cowichan Adapts as outlined in the Implementation Plan	✓	
3.3 Fully implement Emergency Management Cowichan as a regional service to enhance emergency planning and preparedness as required and in alignment with the modernized Emergency Management legislation and regulations	✓	✓
WATER RESERVOIRS AND STORAGE		
3.4 Work with our partners to complete the replacement of water storage infrastructure on Cowichan Lake and the Stocking Lake Dam	✓	



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4 To promote organizational excellence.		
ACTIONS	BOARD	EAD*
4.1 Implement a new reporting regime that includes periodic strategic planning updates, project updates and tracking of strategic initiatives	✓	✓
4.2 Be an employer of choice – celebrate and communicate recognition and appreciation of staff	✓	
4.3 Develop and report on measures to improve recruitment and retention of employees	✓	
4.4 Promote a learning culture to support effective decision-making and program delivery	✓	✓

Our Livelihoods



Create opportunities to build economic prosperity in our communities and for all our residents across the entire region.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 5 To increase the levels of economic resiliency, security, and prosperity for residents of the Cowichan Region.		
ACTIONS	BOARD	EAD*
5.1 Update the 2018-2022 Economic Development Cowichan Strategic Plan to build on our strengths and to emphasize: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the need for new investment in employment, creating industries to help the Cowichan Region thrive opportunities aimed at building the region’s economic diversification & resiliency; the ongoing importance of innovation in agriculture and other foundational industries of the Cowichan Valley; opportunities to partner with First Nations in the pursuit of shared objectives and joint ventures; and opportunities associated with major projects such as the hospital 	✓	
5.2 Identify potential initiatives for investment and partnerships to enhance community public spaces in our rural centres through the Local Area Planning process		✓



Our Communities

We work to enhance the livability of our communities for residents of all backgrounds and income levels.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 6 To create healthy, livable, and efficiently serviced communities.		
ACTIONS	BOARD	EAD*
6.1 Encourage collaboration and coordination on the development of Official Community Plans, land use policies, and bylaws across Electoral Areas, Municipalities, and First Nations	✓	✓
6.2 Modernize the Official Community Plan for the Electoral Areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update development permit area guidelines and exemptions • Strengthen climate action policy • Strengthen ecological and water protection measures • Encourage new development in accordance with Smart Growth principles 		✓
6.3 Modernize and enhance the CVRD's Development Services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement a Land Management System • Enhance development approval processes through improved policies, procedures and bylaws • Enhance public awareness and participation in development processes • Support Advisory Planning Commissions 		✓
6.4 Pursue provincial and federal funding to implement the Cowichan Internet and Cellular Connectivity Strategy and the Telecommunications and Antennae Structures Policy and support the delivery of improved services to all communities in the CVRD	✓	



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 6 (CONTINUED)		
ACTIONS	BOARD	EAD*
<p>6.5 Advocate to senior levels of government on items that the Board feels are impacting achievement of local government objectives in the Cowichan Valley, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watershed management planning • Water protection funding • Private Managed Forest Lands • Vancouver Island Land Use Planning • Land use decision making • Emergency and disaster debt management • A renewed fiscal framework for local governments in BC 	✓	
6.6 Establish a new South Sector Liquid Waste Management Plan		✓
6.7 Implement 3 stream collection for solid waste, recycling and organics		✓
6.8 Explore design and planning improvements to Bings Creek facility	✓	
6.9 Explore opportunities for service coordination and consolidation incorporating the recommendations of the Utility Service Review	✓	✓
6.10 Implement the Local Government Bylaw Dispute Adjudication System		✓
6.11 Review, update and modernize noise, nuisance and, building bylaws applicable to Electoral Areas		✓



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 7

To make available a range of housing options and housing tenures at different income levels and stages of life.

ACTIONS	BOARD	EAD*
7.1 Update the regional housing needs assessment in 2024 (interim) and again in 2028	✓	
7.2 Complete the Workforce Housing Strategy	✓	
7.3 Collaborate with regional partners to protect existing affordable housing and encourage the development of additional, affordable housing options including those needed to attract workers and for vulnerable populations	✓	✓
7.4 Explore potential housing incentives	✓	✓
7.5 Enhance enforcement of and modernize short term rental regulations in electoral areas		✓



Our Environment

We are committed to protecting our natural assets and diverse ecosystems for the benefit of the entire region, including its natural environment, and the current and future generations of people who choose to live here.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 8 To manage current and future demand for water resources in ways that recognize and respect resource limits and the needs of our natural environment.		
ACTIONS	BOARD	EAD*
8.1 Undertake the initiatives in the Drinking Water and Watershed Protection work program, including research and data acquisition, and the development of watershed management plans for the Region's watersheds	✓	
8.2 Provide support to community partners involved in local watershed governance	✓	✓
STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 9 To strengthen, in collaboration with our partners, our airshed planning efforts improving the quality of the air we breathe.		
ACTIONS	BOARD	EAD*
9.1 implement Regional Airshed Protection Strategy	✓	
9.2 Update the Smoke Bylaw for Electoral Areas		✓



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 10

To support efforts aimed at ecosystem protection and preservation.

ACTIONS	BOARD	EAD*
10.1 Protect and preserve the CVRD's existing regional parks - undertake Regional Parkland Strategy	✓	
10.2 Review the Regional Parkland Acquisition Strategy, considering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the protection and connectivity of sensitive ecosystems and significant environmental features • opportunities for active and passive recreation • partnerships, gifting, long-term leases, rights-of-way, and other tools available, in addition to direct purchase, to acquire lands 	✓	



Our Infrastructure

We work within our financial means to provide and maintain the infrastructure systems required to meet the needs of our communities.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 11 To support the development and use of alternative transportation opportunities in the region.		
ACTIONS	BOARD	EAD*
11.1 Enhance and expand regional transit service as funding allows	✓	
11.2 Identify and pursue opportunities to develop and/or complete multi-purpose trails that connect and traverse jurisdictions	✓	
11.3 Develop and implement a framework to identify, prioritize, and fund active transportation infrastructure within Electoral Areas		✓
11.4 Advocate to MOTI for active transportation improvements in Electoral Areas		✓



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 12
 To demonstrate strong fiscal stewardship.

ACTIONS	BOARD	EAD*
12.1 Fully implement an asset management program, including all asset groups and natural assets, which mitigate climate risks	✓	
12.2 Refine sustainable service delivery plans within the CVRD’s asset management program	✓	
12.3 Increase regional service coordination to support cost efficiency	✓	✓





Cowichan Valley Regional District

175 Ingram Street | Duncan, British Columbia V9L 1N8

250.746.2500 | 1.800.665.3955 | cvrd.ca

