

COWICHAN VALLEY REGIONAL DISTRICT

CORPORATE STRATEGIC PLAN
2020-2022

CVRD

OVERVIEW

FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

It is my privilege to present the Cowichan Valley Regional District's *2020-2022 Strategic Plan* on behalf of the CVRD Board of Directors.

The *Plan* presents a series of strategic objectives chosen by the Board to address the challenges facing the regional community, including the economic impacts of COVID-19, changes to our climate, the health of our ecosystems and water resources, and the need for progressive growth management. Opportunities for reconciliation with First Nations are also reflected in the Board's objectives, as are residents' expectations related to meaningful engagement, cost-effective services, and strong fiscal accountability.

The strategic objectives are organized under five themes adapted from *Cowichan 2050*, the long-term regional collaboration strategy. Actions are listed to support and help achieve each objective.

The process to develop the *Strategic Plan* started in 2019, before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. By the time the region-wide lockdown began in March, 2020, much of the *Plan* had been drafted. Following the partial lifting of restrictions in the summer of 2020 the Board gathered to revisit its work. What Directors quickly realized was that, rather than rendering the earlier work irrelevant, COVID-19 and its impacts served to emphasize the importance of the themes and the timeliness of the objectives and actions identified. Indeed, Directors realized that investments to be made and efforts to be taken in support of the objectives would play a major role in helping the broader community recover from COVID-19 and build resiliency for the future.

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CVRD DIRECTORS

AREA A
Mill Bay/Malahat
Blaise Salmon

AREA B
Shawnigan Lake
Sierra Acton

AREA C
Cobble Hill
Mike Wilson

AREA D
Cowichan Bay
Lori Iannidinardo

AREA E
Cowichan Station/Sahtlam/Glenora
Alison Nicholson

AREA F
Cowichan Lake South/Skutz Falls
Ian Morrison (Vice Chair)

AREA G
Saltair/Gulf Islands
Lynne Smith

AREA H
North Oyster/Diamond
Vacant

AREA I
Youbou/Meade Creek
Klaus Kuhn

TOWN OF LAKE COWICHAN
Tim McGonigle

TOWN OF LADYSMITH
Aaron Stone (Chair)

CITY OF DUNCAN
Michelle Staples

MUNICIALITY OF NORTH COWICHAN
Al Siebring

MUNICIPALITY OF NORTH COWICHAN
Debra Toporowski

MUNICIPALITY OF NORTH COWICHAN
Kate Marsh

All local governments, including the CVRD, have limited resources with which to take action and effect change. This reality means that the Regional District must manage its finances carefully, be judicious in its pursuit of strategic objectives, and stay focused on its core services. The need for strong fiscal discipline and focus is particularly important now given the impacts of COVID-19 on the region's economy.

The Board recognizes that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused financial loss and considerable stress for many businesses and key industries in the Cowichan Region, as well as for the households that rely on them for their livelihoods. The CVRD will help with economic recovery efforts by giving special attention to objectives under the theme "Our Livelihoods" aimed at advancing economic development.

The Board recognizes as well, however, that investments made under other themes will also help to address economic challenges and position the region for future economic prosperity. Investments in support of effective growth management and high quality development, for example, will generate economic activity in addition to social, environmental, and quality-of-life benefits. The same can be said for investments in the region's parks and trail networks, its partnerships with First Nations, its infrastructure assets and facilities, and its critical efforts on climate action. These importance of these investments cannot be ignored.

The interconnected nature of the themes set out in the *Strategic Plan*, and the need for balance in directing the Regional District's resources towards its strategic objectives, are the two most important take-aways from the Board's post-lockdown discussions during the development of the *Plan.*

I wish to thank all Directors and senior staff for contributing their time, energy, and ideas to the process through which this *2020-2022 Strategic Plan* was developed. Work on the strategic objectives set out by the Board will help the region emerge from COVID-19 with greater resiliency and a clear sense of purpose. The pandemic has highlighted for us how fortunate we are to live in such a beautiful, dynamic part of British Columbia. Progress on the *Plan* will help to ensure that the Cowichan Region remains a caring, safe, prosperous, diverse, and ecologically sound community, with opportunities for current and future generations.

Aaron Stone
Chair

COWICHAN REGION

The Cowichan Valley Regional District sits on the traditional, unceded territories of the Cowichan Tribes and the Ditidaht, Penelakut, Halalt, Stz'uminus, Lake Cowichan, Lyackson, and Malahat First Nations.

The region covers an area of 3,473 km^2 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; the Salish Sea sits on the region's eastern border. More than 80,000 people live in the region's four municipalities and nine electoral areas.



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REGIONAL DISTRICT

GOVERNANCE

The CVRD is governed by a 15 member Board comprised of six appointed directors from four municipalities (North Cowichan has three appointees based on population), and one elected director from each of the nine electoral areas. Each year, the CVRD Board elects a Chair and Vice-Chair. The Chair is responsible for establishing the Board's committee structure.

SERVICES

The regional district provides a broad range of services to its residents. While a small number of these services is mandated by the Province – solid waste management planning, emergency planning, and electoral area planning are examples – the majority is determined by the Board. Services may only be provided, however, with the approval of the electors who receive them.

The services provided may be regional, sub-regional, or local, and include the following examples:

Regional

Solid waste management, 911 emergency, administration, economic development, environmental services, regional parks, capital financing for hospitals, drinking water and watershed protection

Sub-Regional

Land use planning, bylaw enforcement, building inspection, recreation centres, parks transit, animal control

Local

Fire protection, water and wastewater systems, community parks, community centres, critical street lights

FUNDING

Funds required to operate the regional district's services are generated from property taxes, fees, and charges. Unlike municipalities, regional districts are required to match the costs of its services to the residents that benefit from them; thus, residents pay only for the services they receive.

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VISION, MISSION, PRINCIPLES

VISION

The Cowichan Region is a diverse collection of vibrant, livable, and healthy communities, balanced in its pursuit of economic, social, and environmental opportunities.

MISSION

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

PRINCIPLES

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	We promote and facilitate a happy, healthy, supportive workplace

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GUIDING ASPIRATIONS

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.

SUSTAINABILITY

Make our region more sustainable.

The Cowichan Region is experiencing steady population growth; it is anticipated that growth pressures will continue to be a significant factor over the coming decades. These pressures will be exacerbated by impacts associated with climate change which will place further stress on our 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.

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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. In light of these challenges, we must improve our region's resilience by strengthening the adaptive capacity of our communities and supporting systems. We will 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.

RELATIONSHIPS

Build strong, inclusive relationships.

Social belonging and engagement are key components of community wellbeing. 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.

THEMES

Five themes, adapted from the *Cowichan 2050* regional vision document, are used to organize and present the Board's strategic objectives and supporting actions.



INTERCONNECTED

The five themes, profiled below, are connected to one another. Objectives and actions pursued under one theme contribute to efforts, and help to achieve successes, under the other themes.

Our Livelihoods	Create opportunities aimed at building economic prosperity in our communities, and for all of our residents across the entire region.
Our Commitments	Honour our commitments to Smart Growth management, local First Nations, meaningful community engagement, and significant climate action.
Our Infrastructure	Work within our financial means to provide and maintain the infrastructure systems required to meet the needs of our communities.
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.

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THEME

OUR LIVELIHOODS

Create opportunities aimed at building economic prosperity in our communities, and for all of our residents across the entire region.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

To increase the levels of economic resiliency, security, and prosperity for residents of the Cowichan Region.

Actions	Board	EAD*
Update the *2018-2022 Economic Development Cowichan Strategic Plan* to build on the strengths we have, and to emphasize: – the need for investment in employment-creating industries to help the Cowichan Region in its efforts to recover from COVID-19 – opportunities aimed at building region's economic resiliency – the ongoing importance of the traditional industries of the Cowichan Valley – opportunities to partner with First Nations in the pursuit of shared objectives and joint ventures	✓	
Advance community place-making initiatives		✓
Develop procurement policies to promote social equity	✓	
Leverage economic development opportunities associated with a new district hospital	✓	
Develop through collaboration with First Nations and Municipalities a Regional Strategy on Food Security	✓	

* Electoral Area Directors, responsible for electoral area services

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THEME

OUR COMMITMENTS

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

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

To serve, strengthen, and connect Cowichan communities through collaborative governance.

Actions	Board	EAD
Support community-led reconciliation and relationship building through the establishment of protocols and partnerships with First Nations	✓	
Further the *Cowichan 2050* initiative through the establishment of a *Cowichan 2050 Working Group* and a set of *Regional Roundtables*	✓	
Promote and fund Electoral Area Director capacity building efforts to support collective decision-making		✓
Promote and fund organizational capacity aimed at enhancing community engagement	✓	

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STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

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
Apply the findings from the *Regional Climate Change Vulnerability and Risk Assessment* to our Official Community Plans, Asset Management efforts, and Emergency Preparedness program	✓	✓
Complete the feasibility and engineering stages for the replacement of water storage infrastructure on Cowichan Lake and the associated water licence	✓	
Identify and prioritize natural hazard assessments for wildfire, flooding, sea level rise, and landscapes, to inform local and sub-regional land use planning decisions	✓	✓
Develop a Fleet Management Strategy aimed at transitioning to a CVRD electric fleet, supported by charging station infrastructure	✓	
Amend the *Building Bylaw* to incorporate the BC Energy Step Code aimed at achieving net zero emission homes		✓
Identify, build support for and take action on additional initiatives across all of our services to reduce our wastes, cut our emissions, and minimize our overall footprint	✓	✓

THEME

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

To support the development and use of alternative transportation opportunities in the region.

Actions	Board	EAD
Advance inter-regional transit service	✓	
Work with First Nations to identify and pursue opportunities to develop and/or complete multi-purpose trails that connect and traverse jurisdictions	✓	
Develop and implement a framework to identify, prioritize, and fund active transportation infrastructure within Electoral Areas		✓

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

To demonstrate strong fiscal stewardship.

Actions	Board	EAD
Prepare shovel-worthy proposals in anticipation of, and in response to, COVID-recovery infrastructure funding programs developed by other orders of government	✓	✓
Enhance financial report for informed decision-making	✓	
Refine sustainable service delivery plans within the CVRD's asset management program	✓	
Develop and advance an equitable regional recreation funding model	✓	

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OUR COMMUNITIES

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

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

To create healthy, livable, and efficiently-serviced communities.

Actions	Board	EAD
Encourage collaboration and coordination on the development of Official Community Plans, land use policies, and bylaws across Electoral Areas, Municipalities, and First Nations	✓	✓
Update and harmonize Electoral Area OCPs to: – identify climate action priorities – address the need for strong water protection measures, including policies on riparian areas, and direction on community design to enable water capture – encourage new development in accordance with Smart Growth management principles – set out, using development permit areas and guidelines, the Regional District's standards and expectations for development		✓
Modernize the CVRD's development approval function by implementing a land management and development tracking software system, and by enhancing policies, procedures, and support for Advisory Planning Commissions		✓
Develop a regional connectivity strategy and pursue provincial and federal funding to support the delivery of broadband service to all communities in the CVRD.	✓	

Actions continued on next page

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Actions (continued)	Board	EAD
Undertake an operational review of bylaw enforcement services – Implement the Local Government Bylaw Dispute Adjudication System		✓
Review and update key CVRD bylaws that regulate activities on lands in Electoral Areas: – *Soil Deposit Bylaw* – *Unsightly Premises, House Numbering and Graffiti Bylaw* – *Land Clearing Management Regulation Bylaw* – *Smoke Control Regulation Bylaw*		✓

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

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

Actions	Board	EAD
Complete a regional housing needs assessment	✓	
Protect existing, and encourage the development of additional, affordable housing options including those needed to attract workers, and those for vulnerable populations	✓	✓

THEME

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

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
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	✓	
Provide support to community groups involved in local watershed governance	✓	✓

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

To strengthen, in collaboration with our partners, our airshed planning efforts improving the quality of the air we breathe.

Actions	Board	EAD
Initiate a review and update of the *Cowichan's Regional Airshed Protection Strategy* in collaboration with: – First Nations – CVRD municipalities – British Columbia's Ministry of Environment – Island Health and Communities Health Network – School District 68 and School District 79 – Catalyst Paper – other partners	✓	

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THEME

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

To support efforts aimed at ecosystem protection and preservation.

Actions	Board	EAD
Protect and preserve the CVRD's existing regional parks	✓	
Review the *Regional Parkland Acquisition Strategy*, giving consideration to: – the protection of sensitive ecosystems and significant environmental features – opportunities for residents to recreate in and connect to nature – partnerships, gifting, long-term leases, rights-of-way, and other tools available, in addition to direct purchase, to acquire lands	✓	

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