

A scenic photograph of a sunset over a mountain range. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm orange glow across the sky and illuminating the silhouettes of the mountains and trees. The foreground shows a rocky outcrop with some sparse vegetation.

COWICHAN OUR FUTURE

A BACKGROUNDER ON THE OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN MODERNIZATION PROCESS



Where will the next 5,000 people in the Cowichan Valley live?

What types of jobs will the next generations have?

How will we adapt to more extreme weather, such as droughts, storms and flooding?

As the world around us evolves, so too will the Cowichan Valley.

Population growth, an evolving economy and a changing climate are just some of the many changes that our region is facing.

These changes are the result of global trends that extend beyond our region but require timely coordinated local action.

The time is now to work together to address them effectively. To

do so, we need standardized, consistent and clear planning tools.

To ensure this, the Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD) is re-organizing and updating its Official Community Plan (OCP), the main tool that guides how we use land and shape our communities.

The CVRD began this process by “Harmonizing” our existing OCPs into one Regional OCP for the electoral areas,

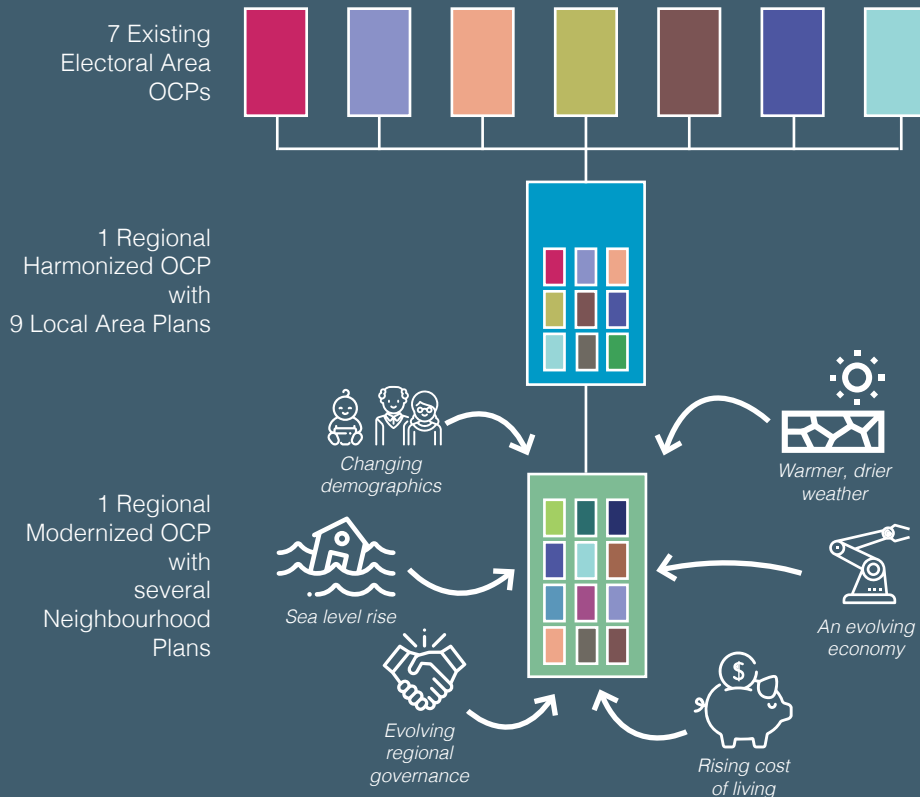
and is now moving towards “Modernizing” that OCP to address regional changes.

The result of this process will be a Regional OCP that will set the foundation for the Cowichan Valley to be an attractive place to live, work, and play for years to come.

This Backgrounder provides information on how planning works in the CVRD and how you can get involved.

Overview

We're following a two step process, (Harmonization and Modernization) to develop a Regional OCP that reflects regional challenges and best practices while staying responsive to the identity and needs of our local communities.





How do we protect the look and feel of our communities?

What types of housing should go where?

Where should we have parks and trails?

These are the types of questions that are determined through community planning.

Planning is a process involving local governments, residents and businesses working together to shape their communities.

From where we live, work and play to how we move around and manage our natural ecosystems, the planning process influences many aspects of our daily lives.

What tools do we use?

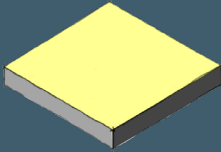
Local governments, such as the CVRD, work together with residents, businesses and community organizations to create and update important planning tools like:

- The Official Community Plan;
- The Zoning Bylaw; and
- Development Permit Guidelines.

Together, these tools serve a range of functions: from expressing our community's vision and values (policy direction); to governing the types and intensities of permitted uses (regulation); to detailing recommendations (guidelines) of how our community grows in the future.

Combined, these tools guide decision-making and hold us all accountable to a shared vision for the Cowichan Valley.

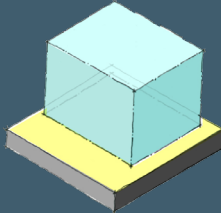
*Policy
Direction*



The Official Community Plan (OCP) sets policy direction for how land can be used, considering the community's shared interests for the future.

For example, it designates areas a community needs for future homes, businesses, farms, natural open spaces and industry.

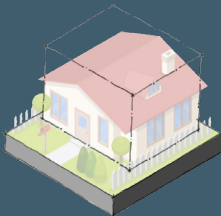
Regulation



The Zoning By-law then regulates what, where and how things are built and operated.

For example, it provides rules that govern not only permitted uses, but also building heights, size and location.

Guidelines



Development Permit Guidelines offer a final layer of planning and design direction related to site specific issues.

For example, an area with steep slopes may have specific guidelines to prevent and protect against potential landslides.



How are planning decisions made in the CVRD?

The big decisions affecting how our community grows and develops are ultimately made by the CVRD Board.

The CVRD Board considers amendments to the OCP, changes to the Zoning Bylaw and reviews certain Development Permit applications.

Guided by recommendations within a staff report, the CVRD Board considers how the application meets the policy directions, regulations and guidelines as detailed in the OCP, the Zoning Bylaw and the Development Permit Guidelines.

Ultimately, this process is designed to ensure that local leadership and decision making reflects our community's stated vision for the future.

OUR NINE ELECTORAL AREAS ARE...

Area A - Mill Bay / Malahat

Area B - Shawnigan Lake

Area C - Cobble Hill

Area D - Cowichan Bay

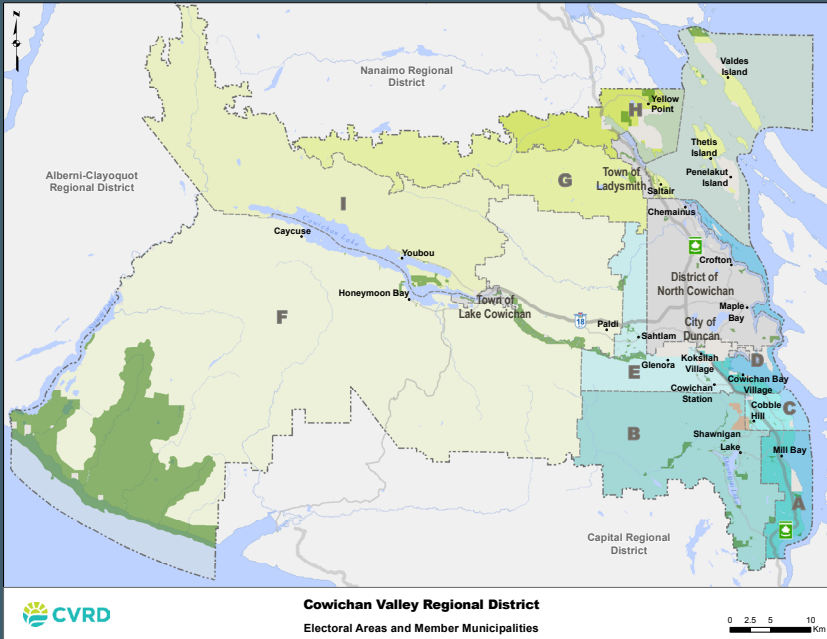
Area E - Cowichan Station /
Sahtlam / Glenora

Area F - Cowichan Lake South /
Skutz Falls

Area G - Saltair / Gulf Islands

Area H - North Oyster / Diamond

Area I - Youbou / Meade
Creek



DID YOU KNOW?

In our region, we also have 4 Incorporated Areas and 8 First Nations, each with their own governments and planning tools:

Incorporated Areas

City of Duncan
District of North Cowichan
Town of Ladysmith
Town of Lake Cowichan

First Nations

Cowichan Tribes
Halalt First Nation
Lake Cowichan First Nation
Lyackson First Nation
Malahat First Nation
Penelakut Tribe
Ditidaht First Nation
Stz'uminus First Nation

The CVRD is governed by a 15 member board comprised of appointed directors from 4 municipalities, the Town of Lake Cowichan, the Town of Ladysmith, the City of Duncan and the Municipality of North Cowichan (North Cowichan has 3 appointees based upon population) and an elected director from each of the 9 electoral areas. The CVRD Board elects a Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson annually.



Why develop a Regional OCP?

Tackling Challenges Together

The pressing issues of our time, such as growth management and climate change, require coordinated action now.

Many of our planning tools were developed before these challenges became urgent.

Today in the CVRD, community planning and decision making is guided by 7 OCPs and 8 Zoning Bylaws across 9 Electoral Areas. The administrative challenge this creates slows our ability to respond to challenges as a region.

A Regional OCP, with detailed local area plans, will allow us

to craft a bold and responsive vision for our shared future, while also celebrating local identity.

Harmonized and Modernized

In reviewing our OCPs and Zoning Bylaws, we found opportunities to make them more consistent and to remove duplicate policies.

A **Harmonized** Regional OCP will improve the CVRD's planning process with a consistent policy approach with which to plan for future land use development.

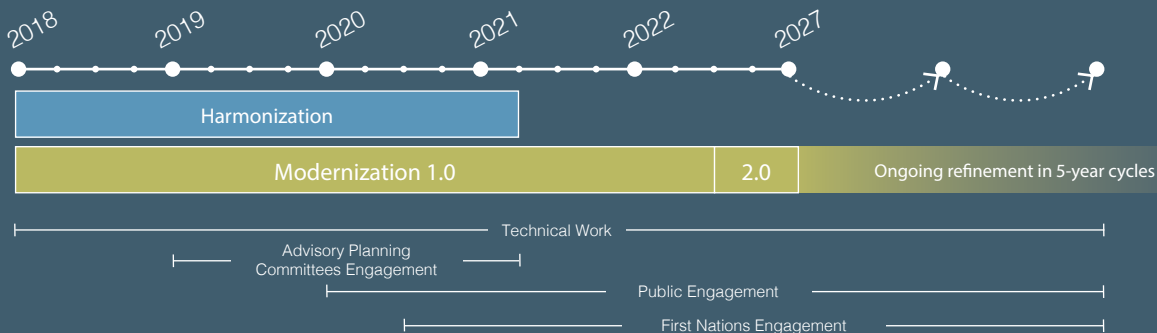
A **Modernized** Regional OCP will further align our shared

vision and values and identify new ways to address regional trends and challenges.

Key Benefits of a Regional OCP

1. **Clarity, Consistency and Flexibility** of policy, regulation and guidelines to ensure efficient and cost effective decision-making and fair outcomes;
2. **Standardized Information** from which to make good planning decisions; and,
3. **Opportunity to Innovate** and better address the pressing policy issues of our time.

Regional OCP & Zoning Bylaw Modernization Timeline



Through Harmonization, we moved from:



1,110
pages

to



510
pages +
240 new maps

What happened in Harmonization?

Staff with the support of members of the Advisory Planning Committees:

- Reviewed all existing OCPs;
- Organized and made consistent region-wide relevant policies;
- Standardized statistics and maps;
- Created Local Area Plans from what is unique for each Area; and
- Removed duplicated policies

How will the CVRD adapt to change?

Many of our community priorities and ways of thinking have evolved since our OCPs were created.

In modernizing our OCP, we also have the opportunity to innovate to better respond to, prepare for and address the anticipated changes in our region.

During this phase of engagement we want to explore which of these trends are most important to you.



Population is expected to grow 30% over the next 30 years. Demographic shifts in the CVRD are expected to increase demand for a wide range of housing options, jobs, services and different community lifestyles for various stages of life.



Warmer, drier climate with more extremes are anticipated. Summer precipitation in the CVRD is expected to decrease by 18%.



Sea levels are expected to rise about 50 cm or 1.5 feet by 2050.



Cost of living is expected to rise which will increase housing costs and demand for rental and affordable housing in the CVRD.



Evolving regional governance as First Nations expand their land management authorities they will continue to become increasingly involved as partners in regional land use, economic development and decisions-making.


In February 2020, the CVRD invited electoral area residents to participate in an initial community engagement process to inform them of the Regional HOCP process.

Through this engagement effort, the values and priorities shared by participants confirmed the goals of the draft Regional HOCP and indicated the values and priorities that could drive the next steps of the Regional MOCP process.

The Regional HOCP draft will be considered for first reading at a forthcoming Electoral Area Services Committee meeting.

Moving forward with the Regional MOCP engagement process we are developing a **consultation plan adapted to the COVID context**.

Based on the feedback collected during the first phase of engagement, moving forward CVRD residents can expect to see the following types of engagement activities:



We want to hear
from you!

- **Opportunities to participate online** (including alternatives to PlaceSpeak)
- **Electoral area specific events** (townhalls) with opportunities to engage in dialogue
- **Community circles** - multiple small group events to be held across the CVRD hosted by community members guided by a discussion toolkit
- **Youth focused engagement events**
- **A speaker series** focused on policy themes

Find more information and full results from the engagement process to date at:
www.cvrld.bc.ca/regionalocp



www.cvrld.bc.ca/regionalocp