

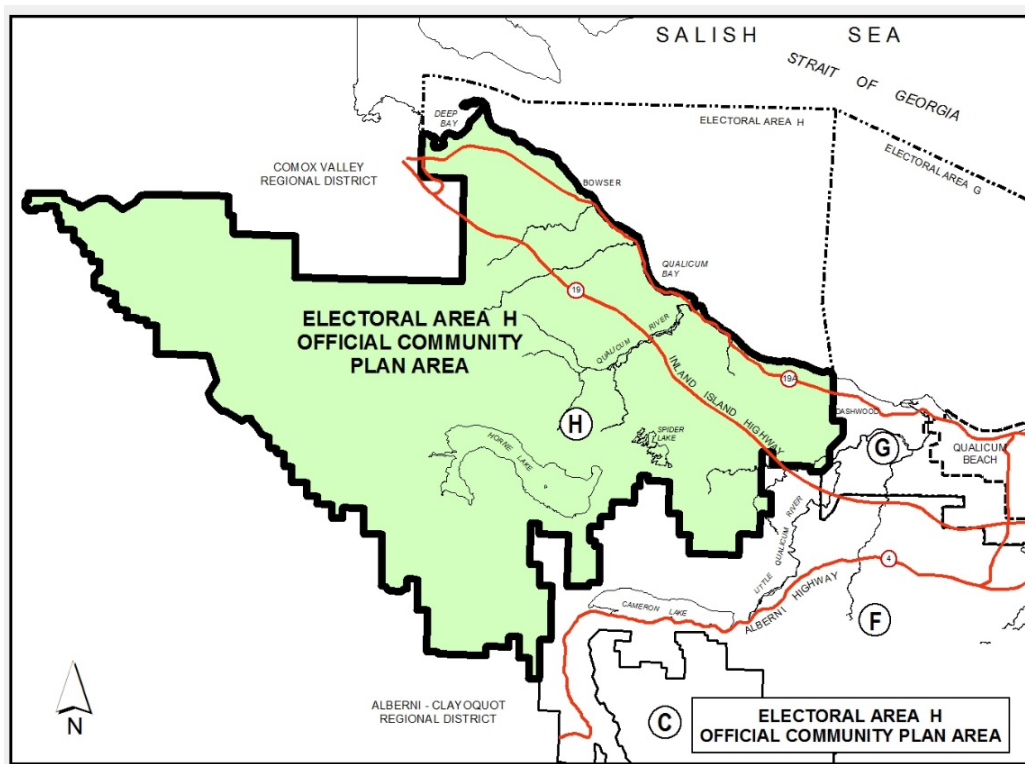
## SECTION 1 - INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

The *Local Government Act* defines an Official Community Plan as a statement of objectives and policies to guide decisions on planning and land use management, within the area covered by the plan, respecting the purposes of local government.

The purpose of the Electoral Area 'H' Official Community Plan (OCP) is to provide a comprehensive set of objectives and policies for managing existing and future uses of land, coastal areas and the surface of the water within the Plan Area. The objectives and policies contained in this OCP are a reflection of community values and the regulations of the local, provincial, and federal government with interests in the Plan Area.

The Electoral Area 'H' Official Community Plan Area includes approximately 28,615 hectares of land and is bordered by the Comox Valley Regional District to the north, Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District to the west, the Strait of Georgia to the east, and Electoral Areas 'G' and 'F' to the south. The marine waters of the Plan Area are also within the Islands Trust Area which includes islands in the Strait of Georgia and surrounding waters. The Qualicum First Nation community is surrounded by Electoral Area 'H'. For the purposes of community planning and this OCP, the Qualicum First Nation community is recognized as independent yet at the same time a part of the fabric of the Plan Area.

The Plan Area is shown on Map No. 1 and includes 26,320 km of coastline and several distinct neighbourhoods including Deep Bay, Bowser, Qualicum Bay, Qualicum First Nation, Dunsmuir, Shaw Hill/Baylis Area, Spider Lake, and Horne Lake.



Map 1: Electoral Area H Official Community Plan Area

It is important to distinguish the OCP from land use and subdivision bylaws. The OCP acts as a guide for the RDN Board, land developers, consultants, property owners, and other agencies in determining community desired uses for land and water surfaces in the community. The Plan provides direction and a basis for the preparation of related bylaws to regulate land use and development. In addition, the Plan will also provide criteria from which development proposals will be considered by the community and the RDN Board.

The Electoral Area 'H' Official Community Plan has been prepared based on the direction provided by the community in the "Community Values Statement". This OCP has benefited from past work from the previous 'Shaw Hill—Deep Bay Official Community Plan' and the Regional Growth Strategy (RGS). The Plan will guide development in a manner that reflects the "Community Value Statement" and "Development Guideline Criteria" drafted by the residents of Electoral Area 'H' for the 2004 OCP. Additionally, in 2016 – 2017 this OCP went through a significant update process with engagement from the community.

The intent of this OCP is to provide direction on how the Plan Area will grow and change over the next 10-30 years. However, with changes in legislation, growth projection expectations, changing attitudes of the residents and landowners, and amendments to the RGS, the Plan should be reviewed as necessary.

## 1.1 Population Growth, Demographics, and Housing Needs

The population of the Plan Area increased from 1,648 residents in 1986 to 3,884 residents in 2016. During this time, the Area experienced two distinct periods of growth; annual population growth of over five percent per year in the late 1980s and early 1990s, followed by a period of slower growth starting in the later half of the 1990s that continued through 2016.

Taking a modest growth rate of 6% which is the average of the past two census periods, the population will surpass 5,000 people by the 2036 census. This estimate is based on a linear growth and does not take into account changing growth rate from year-to-year due to the age structure of the population or migration.

**Table 1: Electoral Area 'H' Growth Rate, 1991 - 2016**

Census Year	Population	Growth Rate
1986	1805	10%
1991	2357	31%
1996	2951	25%
2001	2108	5%
2006	3474	12%
2011	3509	1%
2016	3884	11%

Population estimates are imperfect. They are only estimates and cannot factor in future influences of climate, economy and migration. They also do not anticipate any new government initiatives in land use policies, development or housing.

The Area's population has aged significantly since 1981 with the majority of the population now over the age of fifty. In 2016 the median age of residents was 58.8 years old compared with the provincial median age of 43.0 years old. This trend is expected to continue which has significant implications for land use, housing, services and employment.

The estimated population growth rate has the potential to translate into demand for an additional 100-150 dwelling units in Electoral Area 'H' over the next five years. With the continued

trend of an ageing population it is anticipated that some of this demand will be for housing that is sought by the senior's population such as smaller dwellings close to amenities or a seniors' housing facility. Housing needs over this time period will generally be accommodated in the Rural Village Centres and through the infill and subdivision of existing Rural and Rural Residential Lands and within surrounding municipalities that have greater levels of services.

## 1.2 Public Engagement

This Electoral Area 'H' Official Community Plan (OCP) is the result of two comprehensive public consultation processes. First in 2003-2004, and again in 2016-2017 when updates were made to the Plan. In 2003-2004 the community came together to discuss key issue areas, to establish community priorities and to outline the vision for the future development of the area in Community Values and Development Guideline Criteria Statements.

A public engagement process began in 2016 for an update to this OCP. It was initiated with an online survey asking community members to describe what has changed and what has stayed the same in their community since the last OCP Review, and what are the most important issues for the community right now. Through a series of public open houses and Community Working Group meetings, these issues were further explored. A project website, email subscriber list, and outreach activities at local events aimed to spread the word about the project and invite input via email, letter, and meeting with the lead planner at weekly office hours held in Bowser.

The resulting updates to the OCP confirm continued relevance of the Community Values and Development Guideline Criteria, and add renewed emphasis on economic development, affordable housing, active transportation (such as walking and cycling) and climate change adaptation.

The Regional District of Nanaimo (Regional District) recognizes the need for ongoing public consultation through the implementation of this Plan. The community will continue to be consulted through public information meetings held on development applications and through other ongoing Regional District consultation initiatives.

## 1.3 Community Values Statement

The Plan Area is made up of distinct neighbourhoods that have a diverse range of activities and interests but share many common values. Over the years, the area has developed to accommodate a broad mix of rural, residential, recreational, tourist, small scale commercial, and resource uses with an emphasis on mutual respect and diversity. The combination of climate, spectacular natural environment, outdoor recreation opportunities, water resources, entrepreneurial spirit, and the progressive attitude of residents have resulted in a highly desirable and vibrant community.

Given the attributes of the area, residents recognize that there will be pressure for change and development in their neighbourhoods. As the future unfolds, residents will embrace compatible development, while at the same time maintaining the values that are fundamental to the health and prosperity of the community. The future growth and development of the community will require that a balance is struck among these values. These values have been formed based on the input and priorities of the residents who make up the neighbourhoods of the Plan Area and will be used to help guide future decisions on development proposals, environmental protection initiatives, and infrastructure development for the community, the Regional District and senior government agencies. These values are as follows:

## Community Values Statement

1. Protect rural character and contain urban development to village nodes;
2. Identify and protect watersheds and aquifers from degradation, inappropriate development and pollution to ensure a continued safe water supply;
3. Recognition that the sustainable development of the area must be linked to groundwater quality and quantity for all residents;
4. Protection and promotion of natural, environmental, and geographic features;
5. Support for development regulations to protect environmentally sensitive areas, natural hazard lands, the marine/freshwater foreshores, and aquifer recharge areas;
6. Recognition that a comprehensive approach to managing sewage/septage is required;
7. Recognition that a comprehensive approach to stormwater management is required;
8. Support for a diversified economy, focusing on small scale commercial, human service sectors, and tourism, primarily within the Rural Village Centres;
9. Support for economic diversity in new and existing developments that complement the rural integrity of Area 'H';
10. Recognition of the importance of home based businesses in the growth and diversification of the area;
11. Respect for First Nations, as well as consultation and collaboration to develop approaches to issues of mutual interest;
12. Protection of resource lands for suitable resource uses;
13. Minimize the encroachment of incompatible land uses;
14. Recognition of Horne Lake as a unique recreational opportunity;
15. Support for environmentally responsible shellfish aquaculture, recreational and commercial fishery, and salmon enhancement;
16. Recognize and support Deep Bay Harbour as a viable commercial and recreational port;
17. Preservation and enhancement of green space, access to public lands, integrated trails and beaches;
18. Recognize the need for and continued support for Electoral Area 'H' local schools and community centres;
19. Promotion of a mixed community providing economic opportunities, affordable housing, and services for all residents;
20. Recognition and support for enhanced transportation corridors; and
21. Require comprehensive public consultation with respect to decisions about the future development of all lands and services within our communities.

## 1.4 Consistency with Regional Growth Strategy

Electoral Area 'H' is one of seven electoral areas within the Regional District of Nanaimo. These electoral areas, in partnership with the City of Nanaimo, the City of Parksville, the Town of Qualicum Beach, and the District of Lantzville have agreed to limit sprawl and contain development through the adoption of a Regional Growth Strategy. The Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) articulates a vision of a desirable, future Region and sets out eleven goals for attaining this vision. In accordance with Section 445 of the *Local Government Act*, this OCP must be consistent with the Regional Growth Strategy. In response to the RGS goals, the Electoral Area 'H' OCP does the following:

### *RGS Goal 1: Prepare for Climate Change and Reduce Energy Consumption*

In accordance with Section 437(3) of the *Local Government Act*, this OCP includes targets for greenhouse gas emissions reduction and policies and actions to achieve the targets; this OCP encourages increased density and a mix of uses in Village Centres to reduce the reliance of residents on the private automobile and to increase viability of public transit. The need to understand the future impacts of climate change is addressed in this OCP, as well as steps that need to be taken to adapt to these impacts.

### *RGS Goal 2: Protect the Environment*

Through the use of policies and development permit areas, this OCP provides protection to the area's environmentally sensitive features such as aquifers, streams, coastal areas, eagle and heron nests. The OCP includes policies that apply at the time of rezoning, policies that encourage property owners to protect these sensitive areas, and policies that communicate the community's preference to other levels of government and other agencies.

### *RGS Goal 3: Coordinate Land Use and Mobility*

This OCP supports land use patterns and mobility networks to reduce automobile dependency and provide for efficient movement of people and goods. This plan supports the creation of compact communities served by active transportation networks and a multi-modal system of transportation that includes the automobile, transit, cycle and foot.

### *RGS Goal 4: Concentrate Housing and Jobs in Rural Villages and Urban Growth Centres*

This OCP supports a range of housing types and sizes, as well as areas for commercial and mixed-use development within rural villages. In doing so, the plan provides opportunities for people to live closer to their place of employment and the services that they require on a daily basis; thereby reducing auto dependency and creating vibrant rural communities.

### *RGS Goal 5: Enhance Rural Integrity*

This OCP seeks to enhance rural integrity by supporting agricultural, aquaculture, forestry and small-scale economic and tourism opportunities in the residential areas outside Village Centres. It also provides opportunities for more efficient use of land by supporting alternative approaches to subdivision and development that allow residential dwelling potential to be clustered into a smaller footprint or transferred from other areas where there is land set aside for community or environmental benefit.

### *RGS Goal 6: Facilitate the Provision of Affordable Housing*

This OCP supports the provision of affordable housing through policies that provide for the creation of a range of parcel sizes and housing types and support secondary suites. This OCP also supports the provision of affordable housing as a community amenity, and supports establishment of seniors housing in Bowser Village Centres on Crown lots leased for that purpose, and expansion of existing seniors housing in Qualicum Bay Village Centre.

### *RGS Goal 7: Enhance Economic Resiliency*

This OCP encourages and supports a range of light industrial, commercial and institutional development in appropriate locations. The Bowser Village Centre Plan encourages economic development as the economic centre of the area. Policies for the other Village Centre recognizes the focus of Qualicum Bay on tourist and resort commercial services, and Dunsmuir with its location along Horne Lake Road serves as a “gateway” to the coastal resorts, scenic and recreational opportunities within the Plan Area with a vision to develop into a comprehensive mixed-use community. In the rural areas, redevelopment of the historic tourist accommodation is encouraged, as well as new small-scale tourist accommodation and small scale service commercial.

### *RGS Goal 8: Enhance Food Security*

This OCP recognizes the value of agricultural land for land-based farming, and marine areas for shellfish aquaculture, for present and future food production. It also recognizes the unique position of this area to grow an economy related to aquaculture and processing. This OCP includes a designation for the Agricultural Land Reserve, and policies aimed at maintaining agricultural land and providing resources to farmers.

### *RGS Goal 9: Celebrate Pride of Place*

The Community Values Statement in this OCP grounds the entire Plan in values in which the community takes pride. The natural environment, history of tourism, recreation and fishing, are all recognized with policies to support their continuation and enhancement.

### *RGS Goal 10: Provide Services Efficiently*

This OCP supports efficient, cost-effective community services by encouraging growth into well-defined compact areas at densities that support the efficient use of land and are capable of funding the long-term maintenance and operating costs of these services. The plan supports the provision of community water and sewer to areas within the GCB for the purpose of facilitating the additional development supported by this plan. The plan also recognizes that these services may be required outside of the GCB to address health or environmental concerns, but not to facilitate additional development beyond that which is supported without community water or sewer servicing.

### *RGS Goal 11: Enhance Cooperation Among Jurisdictions*

This OCP supports ongoing communication and cooperation among jurisdictions throughout, with many of the advocacy policies aimed at collaborating with other jurisdictions to meet the objectives of this Plan.

## 1.5 Legislative Framework

This Official Community Plan has been prepared in accordance with the provisions of Part 14 of the *Local Government Act*, implementing Regional District policies for land use and development. All bylaws, permits issued and works undertaken within the Plan Area shall be consistent with the provision of this Plan. The Community Plan may be implemented by regulatory bylaws of the Regional District including the "Regional District of Nanaimo Land Use and Subdivision Bylaw No. 500, 1987".

## 1.6 Organization of the Plan

This Official Community Plan includes text and corresponding maps; it is organized around the key issue areas identified during the public consultation processes, and includes development permit areas which are regulatory tools that assist in implementing objectives and policies of this Plan.

Each section of the Plan contains objectives and policies. Objectives express the community's values and long term aspirations. They are the community's statements of what is important to the residents and land owners of Electoral Area 'H'. Policies express the community's response to these objectives. The policies are the 'how

to' for each objective and provide specific direction to the Regional District Board, the community, land developers, and provincial and federal agencies on future uses in the Plan Area. Abbreviations used in this Plan include the following:

**RDN**- Regional District of Nanaimo

**OCP** - Official Community Plan

**RGS** - Regional Growth Strategy

**ALC** – Agricultural Land Commission

**ALR** - Agricultural Land Reserve

**DFO** - Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada

**MOTI** - Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure

**MOE** – Ministry of Environment

**DPA** - Development Permit Area

If any section, subsection, sentence, clause or phrase in this Bylaw is for any reason held to be invalid by the decision of any court, such section, subsection, sentence, clause or phrase may be severed from the remaining portion of this Bylaw.