

# DISTRICT OF SAANICH

**Report To:** MAYOR & COUNCIL  
**Date:** APRIL 22, 2008  
**From:** RUSS FUOCO, DIRECTOR OF PLANNING  
**Subject:** OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN REVIEW

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## **Background**

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The purpose of this report is to twofold: to summarize the Official Community Plan (OCP) review process and relevant legislation; and to present the key components of the newly updated draft OCP.

The Official Community Plan is the principal policy document that Council uses to make decisions on matters such as: land use; growth management; protection of the environment; transportation and mobility; economic development; infrastructure; and housing needs.

Periodically the Official Community Plan needs to be reviewed with Council, the public, staff and other key stakeholders, to determine if the vision, goals and objectives of the document are still valid, and where the document might need to be altered to respond to changes in the community and the larger social, environmental and economic forces impacting all of us. In addition, the Official Community Plan needs to be updated on a regular basis to ensure that it reflects current practices, policies and procedures that have been mandated: Provincially; Regionally; and Municipally.

Saanich's OCP was last reviewed in a comprehensive manner over 15 years ago and was adopted in February of 1993.

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## **Legislative Authority**

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### **Local Government Act**

The "Local Government Act" outlines requirements and regulations in regard to the development of and amendment to Official Community Plans. In general, an Official Community Plan is a statement of objectives and policies to guide decisions on a range of planning issues and land use management. An Official Community Plan should also work towards the purpose and goals of any relevant Regional Growth Strategy.

An official community plan must include policies on the following subject matter:

- residential development required to meet anticipated need over at least a five year period;
- the approximate location and amount, type of present and proposed commercial, industrial, institutional, agricultural, recreational and public utility land uses;
- the approximate location and area of sand and gravel deposits that are suitable for future sand and gravel extraction;

- restrictions on the use of land subject to hazardous conditions or which is environmentally sensitive;
- the approximate location and phasing of any major road, sewer and water systems;
- the approximate location and type of present and proposed public facilities, including schools, parks and waste treatment and disposal sites; and
- housing policies respecting affordable housing, rental housing and special needs housing.

An official community plan may also include policies on the following subject matter:

- social needs, well being and development;
- maintenance and enhancement of farming on land in a farming area or designated for farming use; and
- preservation, protection and enhancement of the natural environment, its ecosystems and biological diversity.

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## **Review Process**

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As required under the “Local Government Act”, the general approach and consultation process used to review the Official Community Plan was endorsed by Council in March 2007.

As many of the general goals, objectives and policies of the 1993 OCP were still valid; a strategic approach to the review was taken. Attention was focused on areas where external forces (e.g. climate change, growth pressures, urban design issues, Regional Growth Strategy) or policy changes require amendments to the Official Community Plan to better reflect how Saanich sees itself growing and responding to change over the next 15-20 years.

To ensure that a broad range of citizens could participate in the Official Community Plan review, a statistically reliable telephone survey was used in addition to focus groups, online and paper surveys, and a series of open houses.

Throughout the review process, detailed information was available on Saanich’s web site, as well as in hard copies from the Planning Department. At every stage of the review process collected comments were carefully reviewed and incorporated in the draft document where appropriate.

The details of the review and consultation process, including means of notification, are outlined in Attachment 1.

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## **The Official Community Plan**

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### **A. Official Community Plan (1993)**

The existing Official Community Plan has served the community well over the last 15 years. Our review found that many of the goals, objectives and policies are still valid and as such have been carried over into the new Plan. Some of the key policy issues that are carried over are outlined below.

**Managing Growth** - Saanich has a strong record of protecting both rural and farm land. The Urban Containment Boundary (UCB), Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR), and Sewer Service Area (SSA) policies have been instrumental in protecting these valuable lands. These policies have been carried over into the new Plan and supplemented by new food security, ground water and Regional Growth Strategy policies.

**Environmental Stewardship** - The Municipality and its citizens continue to be committed to environmental stewardship and principles of sustainability. Over the years, Saanich has taken the lead on numerous environmental initiatives such as; streamside protection, tree preservation, addressing invasive species, implementing a “Green Building” policy, and most recently committing to make municipal operations “Carbon Neutral” in 2008. The updated OCP continues and builds on this Saanich tradition.

**Parks & Recreation** - The community also places great value on its parks, trails, recreation facilities and open space. Such amenities make Saanich a desirable place to live in the region and country. Ongoing improvements to these amenities and the protection and development of additional park land and trails will continue to be a cornerstone of the Official Community Plan.

**Working with the Community** - Most importantly Saanich has a long history of working for and with community on a broad range of initiatives. The updated OCP will continue to honour an open and inclusive approach to serving the citizens of Saanich.

#### **B. Updated Official Community Plan (2008)**

In terms of the updated Official Community Plan, several new approaches and policy areas have been included.

**Plan Structure** - While Saanich has been diligently working at becoming a more sustainable community; the updated OCP solidifies this objective in its structure. The document has been broken down into three key sections, namely Environmental Integrity, Social Well Being and Economic Vibrancy, to better reflect this goal.

**Climate Change** - Since the adoption of the last OCP, the issue of Climate Change has become more prominent. Climate change is a global, national, regional, and local challenge. The impact of global warming has so far been relatively modest. However, significant large-scale impacts are expected as a result of increased precipitation, higher temperatures, rising sea levels, increased extreme weather events, and more weather variability. The release of greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide from fossil fuel consumption and methane, into the atmosphere is regarded as the primary cause of global warming. Local governments need to be prepared for and adapt to these changes, and work to mitigate and eliminate local and regional emissions that contribute to climate change.

Saanich has taken a number of steps in the past to address climate change; however, ongoing action is still required. Some climate change milestones include: Saanich was the first Municipality on Vancouver Island to establish an Environmental Management Section (1994); Saanich joined the Federation of Canadian Municipalities 20% Club, which aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 20% (1998); Saanich introduced the Outdoor Burning Ban (2001); Saanich's Sustainable Saanich Action Plan (2008) will incorporate a community climate change and energy strategy and a corporate Environmental Management System for all municipal operations.

**Centres & Villages** - Throughout Saanich there are a number of areas of existing commercial and multi-family development serviced by public transit and adjacent to one or more major roadway. These “Centre” and “Village” nodes range in character, size, and level of completeness, but they all have the potential to become walkable centres that meet a variety of resident and neighbourhood needs.

By focusing new development in “Centres” and “Villages,” Saanich will be better able to meet the objective of becoming a sustainable community, while accommodating new residents and businesses. Keeping the built environment more compact and avoiding building out into rural and environmentally significant lands can also reduce the need for and cost of further extending public infrastructure, and make walking, cycling, and transit more viable.

Sensitivity will be required when addressing land use and design in these more dense nodes. However, appropriate design can ensure that these “Centres” and “Villages” reflect what is unique about each area and are interesting and vibrant places to live, work, and enjoy. Developments in “Centres” and “Villages” should encourage diversity of lifestyles, housing, economic, and cultural opportunities; and most importantly concentrate the greatest densities of residential and employment activity near the centre or focal area of each Centre/Village and locate lower densities and building heights near the periphery.

The Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) estimates that between 2006 and 2026, approximately 6,930 new dwelling units would be required in Saanich to meet the population forecast of the RGS. It should be noted that this “target” can be achieved through the construction of a mix of single family dwellings, townhouses, and mid-rise apartments. The draft OCP indicates that additional height/density may be considered in appropriate locations within “Major Centres”, subject to the provision of substantial public amenities, affordable housing, and “green” features as part of the development proposal.

**A Range of Mobility Options** - Conventional mid-twentieth century development patterns, based predominantly on automobile use, have led to costly low-density suburban sprawl, air, noise and visual pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, the loss of environmentally and culturally significant areas, and, for some (particularly people who are unable to drive or own a car), social and economic isolation. As traffic congestion increases, pressure increases to build more roads or widen existing ones. However, there is ample evidence that increasing road capacity simply leads to increased traffic, and ultimately more congestion.

As more people move to Saanich and the Capital Region, getting around will be an issue that needs to be continually addressed on both an individual and collective basis. To reduce the number and length of individual single occupancy vehicle trips and to provide a choice of alternative convenient and attractive travel modes, future policies must be directed toward diversifying travel modes by linking land use and transportation systems. Increasingly, approaches such as traffic calming, transit priority, improved cycling and pedestrian infrastructure, and parking management are being used to achieve more sustainable, efficient, and safer mobility.

**Housing Affordability & Secondary Suites** - The provision of a range of housing types that can accommodate people of different ages, incomes, family structures, and physical and social needs is one of the fundamental elements of creating and maintaining a healthy,

inclusive, and sustainable community. As Saanich grows and as family and household characteristics change, a range of housing will be needed to accommodate new residents, meet the changing needs of an aging population, and provide lifestyle choices.

Housing affordability will continue to play an important role not only in the community's quality of life, but also in its economy, health, and sustainability. Housing prices have risen significantly, making home ownership less and less affordable for most people, especially young families and other people wishing to move to Greater Victoria. No rental housing except by owner/investors is being built and the region's vacancy rate is one of the lowest in Canada. Housing supply and price is affecting the Municipality's ability to attract and retain young families and the necessary workforce. An insufficient amount and range of housing throughout the region forces people to commute long distances to find suitable and/or affordable housing.

The updated Official Community Plan promotes the continued support of the Regional Housing Affordability Strategy and Trust Fund. While only part of the overall solution to Housing Affordability, the Plan also calls for reviewing existing regulations to consider the provision of a wide range of alternative housing types, such as: "flex housing" and "granny flats"; and legal secondary suites implemented on a phased and/or pilot area basis.

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### **Next Step**

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Once the review of the Official Community Plan is complete, work will continue on the updating of the Development Permit Area (DPA) Guidelines to bring them into alignment with the goals and objectives of the new OCP. Recent Provincial Legislation such as Bill 27 (Green Communities) and the Green Building Code will greatly assist with the revision of the DPA Guidelines and help create a more sustainable built environment.

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

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That the Official Community Plan (2008) be considered for approval and referred to Public Hearing.

Report prepared by:

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Report reviewed by:

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Russ Fuoco, Director of Planning

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cc: T. Wood, Municipal Administrator

### **ADMINISTRATOR'S COMMENTS**

## Attachment 1 – Review & Consultation Process

### Review Process

| 2007 – 2008 Time Line | Phase   | Activity   |
|-----------------------|---|--|
| March                 | Reporting   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Report to Council regarding proposed review and consultation process.</li> </ul>  |
| March - April         | Pre-referrals, Background Research & Preparation. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Met with relevant Committees of Council, Neighbourhood Associations, other stakeholders and staff to provide overview of process and answer questions.</li> <li>▪ Preparation of survey.</li> <li>▪ Preparation for focus groups</li> <li>▪ Prepare background information and display boards for open houses and send out notification and arrange for newspaper advertisement.</li> </ul> |
| April - June          | Stakeholder Input                                 | <p>Obtain public input through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ telephone survey;</li> <li>▪ four (4) focus groups ( 2 general public, 1 seniors, 1 youth);</li> <li>▪ online survey;</li> <li>▪ paper survey;</li> <li>▪ two (2) open houses; and</li> <li>▪ a meeting with development &amp; business representatives.</li> </ul>   |
| July – November       | Analysis & Drafting                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Preparation of draft Official Community Plan.</li> <li>▪ Staff Review &amp; reworking of document.</li> </ul>   |
| December - March      | Presentation & Feedback                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Draft Plan presented at two (2) open houses.</li> <li>▪ Draft Plan available online.</li> <li>▪ Draft Plan hard copies available.</li> <li>▪ Presented draft OCP to Neighbourhood Associations via SCAN &amp; Committees of Council.</li> <li>▪ External referrals sent out.</li> </ul>   |
| March - April         | Rework & Edit                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reworked document based on feedback.</li> </ul>   |
| May - June            | Formal Review                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Report to Council presenting the Official Community Plan.</li> <li>▪ Public Hearing.</li> </ul>   |

**Consultation**

|   | Method of Consultation                   | Target Group(s)  |
|---|--|--|
| 1 | Stakeholder Input Meetings               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Neighbourhood Associations;</li> <li>▪ Other stakeholders; and</li> <li>▪ Committees of Council.</li> </ul>   |
| 2 | Stakeholder Input Open Houses (2)        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ General Public</li> <li>▪ Neighbourhood Associations;</li> <li>▪ Other stakeholders.</li> </ul>   |
| 3 | Stakeholder Input Telephone Survey       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Randomly selected individuals, representing five (5) geographic sub areas of our community to ensure feedback from across the community.</li> </ul> <p>(The results are statistically significant, and applicable to the community at large. Margin of error is +/- 5% 19 times out of 20.)</p> |
| 4 | Stakeholder Input Focus Groups (4)       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The focus groups included a broad cross section of people from the general population of Saanich, and were randomly selected.</li> <li>▪ The four focus groups were composed as follows; 2 general public groups, 1 seniors group, and 1 youth group.</li> </ul>                                |
| 5 | Stakeholder Input Online & Paper Survey  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ All citizens of Saanich.</li> </ul>   |
| 6 | Presentation of Draft at Open Houses (2) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ All citizens of Saanich.</li> </ul>   |
| 7 | Presentation of Draft at Meetings        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Committees of Council (2 times per committee).</li> <li>▪ Neighbourhood Associations through SCAN.</li> <li>▪ Each Neighbourhood Association was encouraged to respond in writing to the draft Plan.</li> </ul>   |

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|---|------------------|---|
| 8 | Formal Referrals | <p>Per the "Local Government Act" formal referrals were sent to the following groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The Capital Regional District;</li> <li>▪ Adjacent Municipalities;</li> <li>▪ First Nations;</li> <li>▪ School Districts;</li> <li>▪ Relevant Provincial Ministries and agencies;</li> <li>▪ The Agricultural Land Commission;</li> <li>▪ Relevant Federal Departments/Ministries;</li> <li>▪ Major Institutions;</li> <li>▪ The Development &amp; Business Community (UDI, Chamber); &amp;</li> <li>▪ Staff.</li> </ul> |
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### Notification

- Meetings with Neighbourhoods Associations and Committees of Council to discuss the upcoming OCP review, process and to receive preliminary input were pre-arranged by staff.
- Informing citizens that the OCP review process was underway and the range of opportunities for input was done by the following means:
  - a) Advertisements were placed in multiple issues (10) of the Times Colonist and Saanich News;
  - b) E-mails were sent to Neighbourhood Associations and key stakeholders for distribution to their members;
  - c) Information was placed on the Saanich website; and
  - d) Notices were placed on the front doors of the Municipal Hall and Community Centres letting people know about the OCP review and that copies of the survey could be picked up and completed ones dropped at the reception desk of each facility.

Initial input was collected over the course of six (6) weeks.

- Informing citizens that the draft Official Community Plan was available for review and comment online, in person, or two Open Houses was done by the following means:
  - a) Advertisements were placed in multiple issues (10) of the Times Colonist and Saanich News;
  - b) E-mails were sent to Neighbourhood Associations and key stakeholders for distribution to their members;
  - c) Information was placed on the Saanich website; and
  - d) Meeting with Neighbourhood Associations.

Feedback on the draft Official Community Plan was collected over the course of six (6) weeks. Any person or group needing additional time to respond was accommodated.