

4.1 DRAFT REGIONAL CONTEXT STATEMENT

The 2018 Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw 4017 (RGS), adopted in March 2018 replaces the region’s first growth strategy, adopted in 2003.

Projections show that Sooke has historically experienced steady rates of growth. This trend is expected to continue with additional residents moving to the District over the next 20 years. The population in the District of Sooke increased from 8,165 in 2001 to 13,060 in 2016, at a rate of 3.2 percent (*District of Sooke 2019 Housing Needs Report*). The RGS projects that by 2038, Sooke will have a population of 24,700 residents. If the 2018 RGS is amended to replace municipal projections with an overall growth projection for sub-regions, the RGS sub-regional projections for the West Shore region that includes Sooke, Colwood, Highlands, Juan de Fuca EA, Langford, and Metchosin, project a population increase by 50.9 percent from 83,100 to 125,400 people between 2018 and 2038. Sooke’s municipal projections can align with the RGS municipal and sub-regional projections.

Table One: Population, Dwelling and Employment Projections for Sooke – 20 Year Timeframe

Year	Population	Dwellings	Employment	Source
2011	11,700	4500	2700	2011 Census data
2016	13,060	5599	4685	2016 Census data
2038	20,500	7581	3348	Sooke municipal projections*
2038	24,700	10,900	4,400	RGS municipal projections*

* Sooke and CRD municipal projections are different as a result of different models used. The District of Sooke uses a land-use analysis approach, which requires detailed assessments of developable land in the municipality and the CRD population projections were prepared with reference to the Province of British Columbia BC Statistics’ PEOPLE (Population Extrapolation for Organizational Planning with Less Error) model.

This OCP is consistent with the seven objectives of the RGS, as described below:

4.1.1 RGS Objectives:

MANAGING AND BALANCING GROWTH

Keep Urban Settlement Compact A major goal of the OCP is to become a complete community that allows residents to ‘live, work, play’. Sooke’s Urban Containment Boundary is called the Community Growth Area (CGA) which aligns with the RGS Urban Containment Policy Area. General policies in the OCP require the highest residential density, mixed-use development and majority of commercial development to be located within the Town Centre. Specific policies in the OCP support density bonusing, fee reductions and tax incentives to encourage higher densities that will support transit and a walkable community. Specific policies in the OCP support low to medium density single and multi-family residential mixed with neighborhood scale commercial nodes in Community Residential and limit growth in Gateway Residential by restricting lot sizes. Specific policies in the OCP prevent Rural Residential designated lands outside of the CGA from becoming future urban areas. These policies contribute to supporting the RGS target of locating a minimum of 95% of the region’s new dwelling units within the Urban Containment Policy Area by 2038.

The protection of the RGS Capital Green Lands Policy Area is supported through specific policies in the OCP that restrict development and designate these lands in Sooke as 'Park'. The RGS Renewable Resource Lands Policy Area is supported by general policies in the OCP and in Sooke's Agricultural Plan through the protection of agricultural land.

Protect the Integrity of Rural Communities

To preserve Sooke's rural community, around 62% of the District's land base is located outside of the CGA boundary in the form of park, farmland and rural residential properties, leaving 38% of the land base for targeted growth. The Town Centre has been planned as a hub for a large regional population, and aspires to provide more services, employment and amenities to the community. The rural and agricultural character of lands outside the CGA is protected by a specific OCP policy requiring a 4-hectare minimum lot size for rural residential density. Strengthening the character, quality and economic viability of rural lands and agricultural lands is further supported by general policies in the OCP and in Sooke's 2012 Agricultural Plan. These policies are consistent with the Rural/Residential Policy Area policies of the RGS.

ENVIRONMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Protect, Conserve and Manage Ecosystem Health

Regionally significant parks identified in the OCP include the Sea to Sea, Ayum Creek, Sooke Potholes, Roche Cove and the Galloping Goose. To ensure protection, the OCP designates Capital Green Lands and the CRD Sea to Sea green/blue belt as 'Park'. Specific actions and general objectives in the OCP support the District working with the CRD to discuss regional park land acquisition and regional/local trail network construction. For improved human health and healthy ecosystems, Sooke's Parks & Trails Master Plan and general policies in the OCP support park space, bicycle and trail network connections.

The OCP has a Development Permit Area through which natural environmental features and their associated lands are protected. Minimizing the impact on the natural environment and designing development to prevent pollutants from entering into any water system is supported by specific policies in the OCP. Sooke's Liquid Waste Management Plan is an integral part of the environmental remediation and protection of Sooke Harbour and Basin, terrestrial, fresh water and marine environments. These land use planning mechanisms are used to contribute towards meeting the RGS targets to complete the Regional Trail Network and reduce contaminants to fresh and marine waterbodies.

Manage Regional Infrastructure Services Sustainably

Access to clean, safe drinking water to all residents within the District of Sooke is a long-term intention of the OCP to address environmental issues, fire suppression, agricultural sustainability, and public health. The extension of sewers throughout the CGA to protect the environment is encouraged. Sooke's primary population growth will be within the CGA. To help utilize infrastructure more efficiently to support the promotion of settlement patterns that are cost-effective and minimize negative financial impacts to those currently serviced, the OCP includes specific policies that direct new residential development to existing areas and within the boundaries of the CGA, keep urban areas compact, and support mixed use development.

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY

Create Safe and Complete Communities

The OCP includes general policies to provide a variety of housing types and tenures, encourage pedestrian and cycling networks, and employment opportunities in proximity to places of work, schools, services, recreation, and parks to support the wellbeing of residents. Land use designations within Sooke's CGA are consistent with the RGS "Complete Communities Criteria" with specific policies that direct the highest residential and majority of commercial growth to the Town Centre and specific policies that support small scale commercial nodes served well by transit, major roads and trails. Section 7.5 of the OCP,

Zoning Bylaw No. 600 and Sooke's Floodplain Regulation Bylaw support the protection of development from steep slopes and areas prone to flooding.

Improve Housing Affordability

A major goal of the OCP is to increase the supply of a diverse range of affordable and attainable housing in Sooke. The OCP includes general policies to make the community more affordable, and to create complete communities with housing close to transit and jobs, to reduce commuting cost. The OCP includes specific policies requiring an affordable housing contribution at time of rezoning, allowing secondary suites, and discouraging the stratification of both existing rental housing and manufactured home parks to preserve rental housing.

Sooke is working towards implementing the recommendations within Sooke's 2007 Affordable Housing & Social Housing Policy and has completed a Housing Needs Report. When the OCP is reviewed in the future, the findings from the Housing Needs Report and accompanying economic assessment will be incorporated. The District will work towards meeting the RGS target of increasing the supply of more affordable housing, reducing the number of people in core housing need and reducing the number of people who are homeless; all of which will be incorporated into the next OCP review.

TRANSPORTATION

Improve Multi-Modal Connectivity and Mobility

Increasing the supply of housing and creating more employment opportunities for people in Sooke will help to reduce the high number of residents that commute out of the community. Reducing the dominance of the automobile and improving the regional multi-modal network is supported by general policies in the OCP for development of more bicycle and pedestrian connections and facility improvements, improving and expanding local and regional transit service opportunities, and improved streetscape enhancements. At the time of this amendment an update to Sooke's Transportation Master Plan (TMP) was in progress and this plan will outline new Complete Streets standards and opportunities to enhance local and regional transportation networks. The new TMP will emphasize more active multi-modal transportation such as a pedestrian network plan and will incorporate policies from the BC Transit Sooke Local Area Transit Plan; all of which will be incorporated into the next OCP review. The OCP has strong policies in place to become a compact complete community and with the help of the TMP, the District will work towards the RGS target of achieving a transportation system that sees 42% of all trips made by walking, cycling and transit.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Realize the Region's Economic Potential

The development of a diversified and sustainable economy is a key objective of the OCP for Sooke to become a complete community. The OCP includes general and specific policies to support a diversified local economy through encouraging low impact tourism, industrial, renewable energy opportunities, businesses supportive of climate action, value added forestry, fishing and agriculture, and home-based businesses. An action item included in the OCP is the development of an 'Industrial Lands Strategy'. Specific policies included in the OCP support the long-term protection of RGS Renewable Resource Lands through the requirement for sufficient buffering between agricultural lands and adjacent, non-agricultural properties and restricting lot sizes of rural and agricultural lands outside the CGA to 4-hectare minimum. To bring the OCP into consistency with the RGS, consideration will be given and incorporated into the next OCP review to including a target for achieving a jobs/population ratio of 36 jobs per 100 people in the West Shore.

FOOD SYSTEMS

Food Systems

A major goal of the OCP is to foster a sustainable food culture that is rooted in historical and T'Sou-ke Nation knowledge, viable local production, and environmental stewardship. A key objective in the OCP is to preserve and use agricultural lands. With 531.3 hectares in the ALR, Sooke has roughly 3.1 % of the region's ALR lands. Specific policies included in the OCP, Sooke's 2012 Agricultural Plan and Sooke's 2008 Sustainable Development Strategy support protection of agricultural land, buffering of agricultural uses from non-agricultural properties, and linking food security with economic development. The OCP has specific policies to support community gardens in parks and in residential developments to encourage food security. To bring the OCP into consistency with the RGS consideration will be given to including a target for increasing the amount of land in food production when the OCP is reviewed in the future.

CLIMATE ACTION

Significantly Reduce Community-Based Greenhouse Gas Emissions

A major goal of the OCP is to reduce GHG emissions and promote energy conservation. The OCP contains a target to reduce GHG emissions by at least 33% by 2020. The OCP includes general policies to support compact development, energy efficient buildings, and to create sustainable complete communities with local jobs, and housing close to transit. The OCP includes specific policies to improve walking infrastructure and establish partnerships on opportunities to implement a renewable energy economy. In 2013 Sooke developed a Community Energy and Emissions Plan with specific actions to reduce GHG emissions. In 2014, the District established a Carbon Tax Rebate Reserve Fund. To bring the OCP into consistency with the RGS when the OCP is reviewed in the future, consideration will be given to discussing how GHG emissions will be monitored and tracked so that Sooke can determine if the RGS updated target to reduce community greenhouse gas emissions by 61% by 2038 is achievable.