

District of Sooke

OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN PHASE 3 ENGAGEMENT

NOVEMBER 2021





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THE VISION STATEMENT

In 2050 ...

Sooke is a small town with a big heart. It is a vibrant net-zero emissions community, cradled in the stunning beauty and vitality of the ocean and forest.

Located in the beautiful lands that have been home to the T'Sou-ke and Sc'ianew First Nations since Time Immemorial, Sooke is known for its active waterfront and protected ecosystems and farmland.

Its Town Centre is the hub of public life, defined by a distinct west coast character. Sooke offers exceptional amenities, housing choices, diverse employment, and an eclectic arts and culture scene. It is a caring community where people and the environment are treated with dignity and respect.

Picture Sooke OCP and budget review open house at the Celebrate Sooke! event

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

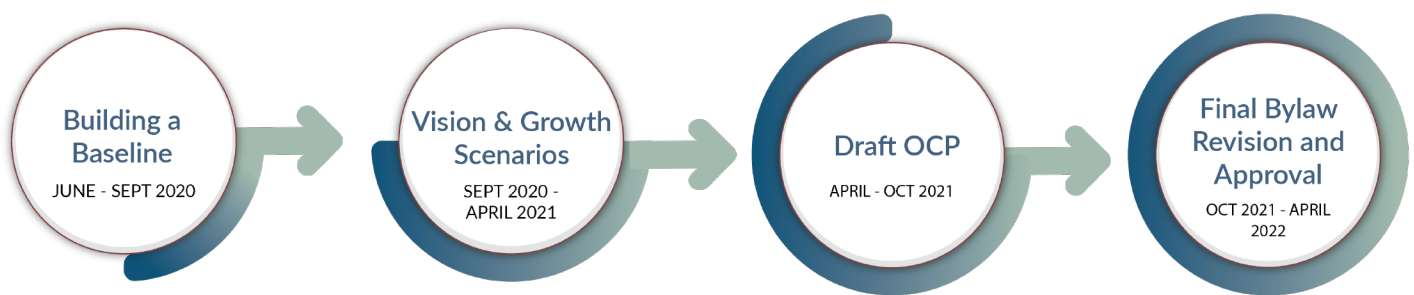
An Official Community Plan (OCP) guides land use and development. All municipal policies, plans and regulations must be in alignment with the OCP. Picture Sooke is the process of reviewing and updating the District's OCP.

Sooke is a growing municipality and faces many challenges, and likewise, opportunities related to community growth. According to the recent census (2016), the population of the District of Sooke consists of approximately 14,000 people, representing a growth rate of 13.7% since the prior census. Based on population projections prepared by Colliers International Ltd, we understand that the District is expecting the population to grow by approximately 12,000 more people by the year 2050. Reviewing the OCP is an opportunity for the District to ensure that the goals and objectives remain relevant as the community evolves.

The process includes significant and meaningful community and stakeholder engagement, preparation of a vision and guiding principles, a regional context statement, preparation of policy options and proposed policy directions, updating Land Use Designations, reviewing and updating Development Permit Area guidelines, and developing new Development Permit Areas. A primary result of the OCP review is to provide a framework to guide community growth and provide a degree of certainty to residents, landowners and the development community about the future of the District.

PROJECT TIMELINE

The review and update of the OCP is an 19-month process, to be completed in January 2022.



WHY WE ENGAGE

An OCP is the most important tool in the District's policy toolkit for influencing the way a community grows and develops. An OCP contains policies that dictate the way land is used and developed, including for homes, shops, offices, industry, public institutions, and more.

Land use and development influence our lived experiences from the moment we start our day to the moment we end it. They influence the types of homes we live in and the types of destinations and amenities in our neighbourhoods. They influence how we move around, including whether it is easy and enjoyable to get around by foot, on a bike, or by transit, which in turn influences our personal health, and the health of our environment.

Land use and development influence our pocketbooks, including how much it costs us to pay for District services such as sewers and roads. They influence public spaces and the look and feel of our neighbourhoods, which can play an important role in our sense of community, our ability to retain and attract businesses and residents, and our overall quality of life.

OCPs are complex, technical documents that have a tremendous impact on the future of a community. Too often, they feel inaccessible to community members and an OCP's role in one's day-to-day life is unclear. Through this process, it is our ambition to highlight how an OCP is a useful and relevant tool for **everyone** it impacts. In doing so, we welcome the imagination and creativity of all community members, stakeholders and partners so we can apply the wealth of your lived experience to an OCP document that is reflective of Sooke's unique needs and ambitions.



Above: Picture Sooke OCP open house at the Celebrate Sooke event

PREVIOUS ENGAGEMENT

Thousands of residents have shaped the OCP's directions. In our first phase of engagement, we learned about the community's vision and values for the OCP. In the second round of engagement, we learned if the draft OCP's emerging vision and goals accurately reflected the community's priorities. And, we learned about community priorities through exploring trade-offs between three different physical growth scenarios.

Each growth scenario explored a different way in which expected population growth could shape Sooke while considering community priorities and urban design indicators like walkability, green space, transit viability and the retention of rural and natural areas. The community shared how elements of each growth scenario did or did not align with their priorities.

This table highlights Phase 2 engagement feedback on the core elements of the Draft OCP. Many other important recommendations were shared by Sooke residents, the Advisory Committee, Council committees, Council members and stakeholders that influenced the direction of the Draft OCP.

PHASE 2 COMMUNITY FEEDBACK	INFLUENCE ON THE DRAFT OCP
<p>1 The vision is well supported, but needed a few tweaks.</p>	<p>The vision was modified to respond to community feedback.</p>
<p>2 The goals are well supported with a few modifications needd for clarity.</p>	<p>The goals were expanded to be more inclusive of community priorities and made more succinct where possible.</p>
<p>3 How we grow is important.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New buildings should minimize impact on natural areas, agricultural areas and undeveloped lands. • Growth should minimize sprawl. • Growth should be concentrated in the Town Centre, but with some growth extending to neighbourhood hubs. 	<p>The draft land use plan focuses new growth in the Town Centre and the Sewer Specified Area.</p> <p>It protects natural areas and undeveloped lands by minimizing the amount of development that is allowed to occur there or preventing it all together.</p> <p>In both these ways, the draft land use plan minimizes sprawl.</p>
<p>4 The design guidelines for Sooke should emphasize sustainable design, provision of green space and public spaces, quaint shopping areas and quality materials that reflect Sooke's unique context.</p>	<p>The draft Development Permit Area guidelines seek to protect environmental and hazardous areas, provide direction for sustainable building design, and design direction for new developments that thoughtfully integrates with its context.</p>

PHASE 3 ENGAGEMENT

ENGAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

Confirm the land use and policy directives.

Identify revisions needed in the Final Draft.

COLLABORATION WITH T'SOU-KE FIRST NATION

Throughout the OCP process, the District has been collaborating with T'Sou-ke First Nation as a partner in planning in order to align the OCP policies towards shared community goals.



Top Left: Picture Sooke OCP farmer's market pop-up
Top Right: Picture Sooke OCP Open House in Council Chambers
Bottom Left and Right: Picture Sooke Open House at the Celebrate Sooke! event



2 Open Houses



Letters to the District



3 Virtual Workshops



Online Discussion Forum

HOW WE ENGAGED

The engagement period ran from September 14th to October 17th. The community shared their feedback through multiple engagement channels including through a Let's Talk Sooke discussion forum, two in-person open houses, virtual stakeholder workshops, phone calls, emails and letters, and ongoing engagement with the OCP Advisory Committee.

District staff and the OCP consultant team staffed events to provide residents and stakeholders responses to any questions about the Draft OCP.

The District promoted the engagement activities through a digital readerboard on Highway 14 near Phillips Road, an online ad campaign directed to people in Sooke, electronic newsletters and mailing lists, pop-up poster boards, signage within parks and trails throughout the community and on the SEAPARC digital sign, social media, the District website, local media and word of mouth.

WHO WE HEARD FROM

We heard from approximately 75 people at the open house events. Over 189 people reviewed content on the Let's Talk Sooke online discussion forum, and 88 of those people downloaded documents for review. Eleven provided comments. We also received dozens of letters from community members and stakeholder groups.

28 community members joined workshops that had representation from the following community groups (note some participants represented more than one community group).

- Transition Sooke (6)
- Sooke Region Historical Society (2)
- Sooke Region Chamber of Commerce (1)
- Sooke Harbour Authority (1)
- EMCS Society (1)
- Amber Academy Youth Fine Arts Society (1)
- Sooke Lions (1)
- BC Housing (1)
- Sooke Shelter Society (2)
- Sooke Fine Arts Society (1)
- North Sooke Community Association (1)
- Sooke Region Lifelong Learning (2)
- Building and development community (12)

WHAT WE HEARD

At community events, we heard broad support for the direction of the OCP. We also heard questions from stakeholder groups about the directions of the Draft OCP.

In some instances, we heard different viewpoints on specific topics. For example, many community members emphasized the important role the climate crisis will play in the future of Sooke, while members of the development community raised questions about how they would implement some of the related green building measures.

The following pages provide an overview of the core questions that underscore many community concerns. A number of other individual comments were raised in community correspondence that will affect changes in the Draft OCP.

HOW FEEDBACK WILL BE USED

District Staff will review the comments that were shared during this phase of engagement and adjust policy directions as needed to respond to broad engagement feedback. We will share how we applied community feedback upon issuing the Final Draft of the Official Community Plan.

HOT TOPICS FROM COMMUNITY CORRESPONDENCE

Unlike previous phases that received written input from a large and diverse group of District residents, most of the feedback that was shared in this phase emerged from community groups and developers, both of whom play important roles in Sooke.

Rather than summarize their feedback, the core themes of their correspondence have been rephrased as questions to consider how the Final Draft of the OCP may respond to their concerns. The following pages present the hot topics that emerged from community correspondence. The responses are meant to provide context for how the Final Draft of the OCP will respond to these core questions.

The District has reviewed all community correspondence and will be making revisions to the Draft OCP based on feedback, even if it is not presented in this document as a hot topic. All community feedback can be found in Appendix B.

1

Will we control the population of Sooke by limiting new development to only social/subsidized housing? How will we meet our GHG emissions reduction targets with a larger population?

Sooke's Housing Needs Assessment outlined a growing mismatch between the tenure of housing that is available in Sooke, and the needs of residents. For example, young people moving out on their own, seniors looking to downsize, and renters may have difficulty finding appropriate housing in Sooke. Without new housing types to manage this mismatch, there can be a number of consequences. For instance it may lead to migration out of Sooke, it could increase housing insecurity for those who do not qualify for, or are not interested in, living in social housing, and can make existing housing more expensive by limiting Sooke's overall supply.

Sooke recognizes that new development can bring positive contributions to our community.

Because of the nature of physical growth today, Sooke has not been able to support community desires like effective public transit, walkable neighbourhoods and small-scale retail. In order for public transit to be effective, it requires a threshold of population density, as do walkable neighbourhoods and local shops. New development can also contribute to community amenities that all enjoy like parks, trails, promenades, schools, community centres and other public spaces.

Regardless of the population size, Sooke needs to reach net zero GHG emissions by

2050. Vehicle emissions are Sooke's #1 source of GHG emissions. Municipalities can reduce transportation-related GHG emissions in two ways: first by promoting active transportation, transit, and electric bicycles/vehicles; and second by reducing the physical distance driven by co-locating homes, shops, services, and jobs in neighbourhoods. Adding new density (i.e. more people) in existing neighbourhoods with walkable access to shops and services that meet daily needs can help reduce overall transportation-related emissions.

The Draft OCP proposes policies that enable active modes of traveling around Sooke, densities that create a Town Centre core, and policies for sustainable development and infrastructure. Beyond vehicle emissions, the Draft OCP contains design guidelines that give direction for low-carbon buildings and protect Sooke's natural environment so that as the District's population grows, it can leverage development to lower overall GHG emissions. Again, Sooke's focus needs to be on reaching net zero for everyone, regardless of population size.

It is up to all levels of government to strategically manage growth in ways that align with the vision and infrastructure capacity of communities.

The global population is growing, Canada's population is growing, British Columbia's population is growing, and so is Sooke's. People will continue to start families and others will move to Sooke for a lifestyle change, new opportunities, or because they are fleeing conflict or the effects of climate change. The Draft OCP, including the Development Permit Area guidelines manage the type and location of development that occurs in Sooke to enable our community to evolve in alignment with a broadly shared vision. As we have welcomed those who have joined our community over the past decades, we will continue to welcome new people into the community of Sooke.

2 How can the OCP better express the climate crisis and overall environmental protection? For instance, can it demonstrate alignment with the 7% solution, including 50% GHG reductions by 2030?

The Final Draft of the OCP will be revised to further emphasize the climate crisis, and will draw clearer links between climate action policies and GHG reduction targets.

The OCP aligns with the Climate Change Accountability Act to ensure the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions achieve the targets set by the Province for 2030, 2040, and 2050. Ongoing work by the Climate Action Committee in the development of the 7% Solution aims to direct community-based solutions by achieving a greater reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. The OCP will guide development through the comprehensive managed growth process, and the 7% Solution will emphasize the need to retrofit homes and adapt a modal shift, both supporting a path to becoming a net-zero emissions community.

At the same time, we have received feedback that policies and guidelines ought to be more prescriptive, while others have suggested that they are too detailed. The Final Draft can uphold its rigour around GHG emission reduction, while also being mindful of the challenges of responding to (and approving) development permits. District staff are reviewing the ways in which added rigour can be matched with a predictable, streamlined development approvals process.

3 Will the District be providing a quantitative analysis of emissions reductions and cost-analysis of sustainability objectives?

The Final Draft of the OCP will provide a methodology of how the policies provided in the Draft OCP support the emissions reduction targets included in the document.

The District has recently hired a 9-month temporary Climate Action Coordinator through the career launcher internship program to identify data sources for meeting the 7% solution and champion Low Carbon Resilience initiatives. Staff utilize Low Carbon Resilience in day-to-day work and through the evaluation of applications.

The Climate Action Committee is working on initiatives in order to have:

- Support to have a dedicated full-time position for Climate Action;
- Story telling to educate on Climate Action and associated strategies including a kick-off campaign to share the story telling;
- Incentive/rebates for retrofitting homes with heat pumps;
- Incentive/rebates for modal shift car share and transit passes; and,
- A pilot project for telework centre.

4 Why were the backcountry access policies removed?

We recognize that hunting and fishing are critical components of Sooke's cultural identity. The backcountry access policies in the previous OCP enabled trespassing on private land and have been removed accordingly.

5 Is the Town Centre being minimized? Why is the Waterfront designation spread out so far?

The Town Centre boundary has not changed in the Draft OCP, but we heard from the community that the character of the Town Centre should be slightly different north and south of Sooke road. The names of the Land Use designations will be changed to clarify this. The Town Centre designation will become Town Centre - Core, and the Waterfront designation will be changed to Town Centre - Waterfront.

We have separated the land use designations to reflect the difference of character. The Waterfront land use designation is meant to provide direction for building heights and densities that protect views and can support access to the water. The Town Centre land use designation permits more density and slightly higher buildings. The Development Permit Area guidelines also provide direction for pedestrian-oriented shopping streets within both land use designations.

6 Why has the land use designation of some properties changed from Community Residential to Rural Residential?

There is strong community consensus that new development ought to be contained within the Sewer Specified Area and thereby minimize its impact on natural, rural, agricultural and undeveloped lands. Where the land use designation has changed from Community Residential to Rural Residential, properties presently have a rural character, are outside the Sewer Specified Area and do not have appropriate zoning for higher density.

7 Can I build single-detached homes (single-family homes) in the District?

Yes, single-detached homes can be built in any of the District's residential or mixed-use land use designations.

8 Can the OCP better demonstrate alignment with other District and Advisory Committee efforts, community facilities, and community programming?

Absolutley. The Final Draft of the OCP will be revised based on feedback to include community facilities that were missing from the Draft OCP's maps, demonstrate alignment with the District's related advisory committee efforts, and highlight opportunities for collaboration between the District and organizations within the community.

9 How will growth be allocated across our community? It is currently unclear.

Based on this feedback, the Draft OCP will be revised to clearly demonstrate where new development will occur. Rooted in broad community consensus, the Draft OCP prioritizes new development in the Town Centre, Waterfront Area, and Town Centre Transitional Residential Area to minimize impact on the natural, agricultural and undeveloped land that's further away from the Town Centre.

10 How were Development Permit Area (DPA) guidelines developed?

Through the Local Government Act, local governments may designate areas of land as development permit areas for:

- Protection of:
 - The natural environment, its ecosystems and biological diversity
 - Development from hazardous conditions
 - Farming
- Revitalization of an area in which a commercial use is permitted
- Establishment of objectives for the form and character of:
 - Intensive residential development
 - Commercial, industrial or multi-family residential development
 - Development in a resort region
- Promotion of:
 - Energy conservation
 - Water conservation
 - Reduction of greenhouse gas emissions

The District recognizes that the previous OCP did not provide enough direction for each of the above areas. The Draft OCP provides more detailed DPA guidelines so that development in Sooke reflects OCP policy and the character the community envisions.

The DPAs were developed in reference to Provincial legislation for environmental protection standards, leading research in GHG reduction, and through detailed review of and experience implementing DPA guidelines in communities with similar goals.

The DPA guidelines will be revised in the Final OCP to ease the permitting process for District staff and the development community while still upholding community objectives. Additionally, hiring new staff to support the development approvals process will be included as part of the implementation strategy of the Final OCP.

NEXT STEPS

Using all feedback, the District and consultant team will update the Draft OCP. It will then proceed through the formal approvals process, including a legal review and a public hearing.

PROJECT TIMELINE

The review and update of the OCP is an 18-month process, to be completed in January 2022.

