

DATE: February 1, 2018

FILE: 6410-20/CV RGS Establishment

TO: Chair and Directors
Electoral Areas Services Committee

FROM: Russell Dyson
Chief Administrative Officer

Supported by Russell Dyson
Chief Administrative Officer

R. Dyson

RE: Saratoga Miracle Beach Local Area Plan

Purpose

To seek approval on the external agency and First Nations referrals for the Saratoga Miracle Beach Local Area Plan (LAP) and to give the LAP first reading.

Recommendations from the Chief Administrative Officer

1. THAT the board give first reading to Bylaw No. 513, being the “Rural Comox Valley Official Community Plan Bylaw No. 337, 2014, Amendment No. 2”;
2. THAT the board endorse the agency referral list as outlined in Appendix C in staff report dated February 1, 2018, and direct staff to commence the external agency referral process for the Saratoga Miracle Beach Local Area Plan;

AND FINALLY THAT Comox Valley Regional District staff consult with First Nations in accordance with the referrals management program dated September 25, 2012, for the Saratoga Miracle Beach Local Area Plan.

Executive Summary

- The Saratoga Miracle Beach LAP (Appendix B) is required as a component of the Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) in order to direct moderate growth in the settlement node. The plan aims to create a livable, walkable rural residential community that retains a rural coastal character.
- A summary of the LAP recommendation is included in Appendix A.
- Highlights include a new area for tourist commercial development adjacent to the existing coastal tourist commercial area, new areas for commercial / light industrial at the intersection of Hamm Road and Highway 19A, some limitations for further growth in the area known as the Saratoga wetlands as shown on Map 2 in Appendix B, and recommendations that policy and bylaw tools to manage area drainage in order to support new development. The plan also includes recommendations to further analyze the drainage patterns in the area, a tree removal bylaw, and to consider a partnership with Comox Valley Land Trust or other agency to protect natural drainage features.

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Stakeholder Distribution (Upon Agenda Publication)

Saratoga and Miracle Beach Residents' Association	✓
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Background/Current Situation

Appendix A includes a summary of recommendations in the LAP. The plan boundaries reflect the Saratoga Miracle Beach settlement node, established in Part 4.5.1 of Bylaw No. 120, being the “Comox Valley Regional District Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw No. 120, 2010”. The area is one of three settlement nodes intended to accommodate moderate growth, and one of three areas that provides for increased growth, development and investment. Once complete, it will be appended as part of Bylaw No. 337, being the “Rural Comox Valley Official Community Plan Bylaw No. 337, 2014” (OCP).

It provides a policy and land use framework to direct future land use and includes policies on water use, climate change adaptations, growth patterns, transportation modes and other infrastructure considerations in the Saratoga Miracle Beach settlement node over the next five to seven years. Map 1 of the plan shows proposed land use designations. The plan identifies a core development area to encourage growth and infrastructure investment in a centralized, compact way. Growth requires affordable and efficient sewer services to support medium and higher density growth on the west side of Highway 19A with full servicing.

The plan includes mapping at one metre contour levels to show the projected sea level rise over 100 years along the coastal tourism commercial area. These lots are already significantly fragmented and small and the plan recommended setting aside additional area for coastal commercial expansion in the area west of the current commercial to Henderson Avenue.

The plan includes a new designation for employment lands, and provides for an additional 12 hectares of commercial / light industrial space. This offers future opportunities for increased commerce, industry and employment growth and investment that will be further defined through zoning.

Two areas are identified as having limited growth potential, and designated as Rural Residential. These areas host a significant number of riverine and estuarine features with surface water present during many parts of the year. Growth opportunities for these areas are considered limited given the natural hydrological features of these areas. The plan recommends that the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) explore policy and service provisions to ensure that rainwater and drainage issues in the Saratoga Miracle Beach area are managed in advance of any significant new growth.

Overall, the plan provides for only moderate growth until such time as water capacity, wastewater management and rainwater drainage matters are adequately addressed.

Public and Private Water Services

The Black Creek / Oyster Bay Water System is nearing capacity, and growth of the area requires that additional capacity be secured. Hydrological work has been completed to identify a new source and the CVRD is working with consultants and Strathcona Regional District to determine the best path forward for drilling a new production well.

Residents along McLarey Avenue and some lots along the west side of Henderson Avenue are serviced by the privately owned Watutco Water Service, owned by the Watutco Enterprises Ltd. In December 2015, Watutco Enterprise Ltd. submitted a written request to the CVRD to assume responsibility and ownership. The CVRD continues to finalize that feasibility study.

Saratoga Beach Estates Master Development Agreement

In November 2017, the CVRD approved revisions to the 2011 Saratoga Beach Estates Master Development Agreement to enable development activities to occur and spur development within the community.

Stormwater Management and Drainage

The CVRD commissioned the Saratoga Wetlands study that looked at the general drainage patterns of the ditches, streams and wetlands, east of the Island Highway. These are natural assets to manage, filter, manage and retain rainwater flow. As such, future development needs to use onsite drainage management features to ensure that any post-development rainwater flow does not exceed the pre-development flow. The plan recommends that CVRD consider the creation of a local service area for stormwater and drainage for the Saratoga Miracle Beach Local Area Plan boundaries and participation in the service area should be considered as a condition of approval of any future development including subdivision and rezoning.

Continued growth in the Saratoga Miracle Beach Settlement Node has the potential to increase the rate and volume of stormwater flowing downstream unless new provisions are in place to manage stormwater along its path by way of retaining natural vegetation and trees. There are a number of policy and bylaw tools that the CVRD could consider to manage area drainage over the long term in order to support new development and also recognize these wetlands as important natural assets. This includes a detailed study of a stormwater management service, local tree removal bylaw and partnership with the Comox Valley Land Trust or similar agency to protect natural drainage area.

Saratoga Miracle Beach Tourist Commercial Development Permit Area

The plan proposes a new form and character development permit exclusive to the area's tourist commercial uses to ease the and guide the transition of this area from residential to tourist commercial that continues to promote the coastal resort theme. The Development Permit Area Guidelines will be presented as part of the development permit area review that is currently underway. In the meantime, any development on the existing tourist commercial lots is subject to the current commercial form and character development permit area guidelines.

Policy Analysis

Part 13, Section 445 of the *Local Government Act* (RSBC, 2015, c. 1) (LGA) requires regional districts to align all bylaws with an approved RGS, including the OCP.

Part 14, Section 475 of the LGA (consultation during OCP development) requires consultation during the revision to an OCP, and this applies as the LAP will be adopted as an appendix to the OCP.

Part 4.5.1 of the RGS identified the Saratoga Miracle Beach area as one of three settlement nodes, and required that a LAP be developed and amended to the OCP to direct growth. The growth strategy includes a policy framework to foster sustainable development in the settlement nodes with a core development area serviced by publicly owned water and sewer and with compact, medium density growth in a livable rural community.

Options

1. Proceed to first reading of the Saratoga Miracle Beach LAP and external referrals to First Nations and external agencies as outlined in Appendix C.
2. Direct staff to revise the Saratoga Miracle Beach LAP, and return to the Electoral Areas Services Committee for further review and direction.

Financial Factors

Resources for the supporting studies were provided through professional fees in the approved 2017-2021 financial plan as supported by engineering services branch and the planning and development services branch. Other than newspaper advertisements and meeting expense the resources for this area plan have used in house resources.

Legal Factors

All legal factors have been considered.

Regional Growth Strategy Implications

The plan was developed in accordance with the RGS. That strategy designated this area as one of three settlement nodes requiring a LAP to direct moderate growth. While this plan is fully compliant with Bylaw No. 120, it varies the timing from the high density targets included in the RGS.

Objective 1C-2 of the RGS recommends that growth in the settlement nodes proceed from base line (2006) measures of 50 per cent low density to 35 per cent medium density and 15 per cent high density by 2030. This plan proposes to defer the high density growth until such densities are warranted and prove to be an acceptable fit in the community.

Intergovernmental Factors

Should the board concur with staff's recommendations to initiate the external referral process, board members must consider whether the consultation should be early and ongoing, and specifically whether consultation is required with:

- a) First Nations
- b) Member municipalities
- c) Adjacent regional districts
- d) School District board, and
- e) Provincial governments and agencies

Appendix C contains a list of organizations and authorities to which this proposed amendment is recommended to be forwarded. This plan will be referred to First Nations in accordance with the referrals management program.

Interdepartmental Involvement

Staff within the community services branch, (sustainability unit) and the engineering services branch (water, wastewater, and liquid waste) have collaborated to develop the plan recommendations.

Citizen/Public Relations

If the board endorses the recommendations, staff will forward this proposal to the Saratoga Miracle Beach Residents Association and the Puntledge – Black Creek (Electoral Area C) Advisory Planning Commission for review and comment. Statutory notice requirements (*i.e.*, public hearing) will be addressed as the application moves through the process.

Attachments: Appendix A - "Recommendations in the Saratoga Miracle Beach Local Area Plan
Appendix B – "Saratoga Miracle Beach LAP"
Appendix C – "External Agency Referral List"

Appendix A

Recommendations of the Saratoga Local Area Plan

3.1 Land Use Designations

- 3.1.1 **Core Development Area:** this is the town centre of the settlement node. It is intended to grow to become a walkable, compact community core that includes a broad mix of residential, mixed medium density residential, commercial and employment land uses. The area will eventually be fully serviced with publicly owned services.
- 3.1.2 **Residential:** this includes small lot neighbourhoods with primarily single family residences with provisions for secondary dwellings and secondary suites with density levels at between four to 24 units per hectare subject to the availability of water and sewer services. The Saratoga Beach Estates master development agreement with supportive zoning is already in place in a portion of this designation.
- 3.1.3 **Mixed Medium Density Residential / Commercial:** this area is designated to provide for the expansion of beach resort tourist commercial development, and medium mixed residential and commercial development over the long term. The designation is intended to encourage growth and development of a range of residential development, vacation rentals, and tourist commercial activities at medium density levels. Designating this area does not affect the existing uses and instead allows for redevelopment of the area with higher densities, such as multifamily, townhouses, condominiums and other commercial uses over time. This designation recognizes that while the projected rate of sea level rise of approximately one metre by 2115 is unlikely to impact the area on its own, increasing winter storm surges and flooding patterns are likely, and as a result, the new designation provides for ample area for increased investment back from the coastal area once servicing is available. A commercial form and character development permit area is proposed to ensure compatibility of the form and character between development and existing community.
- 3.1.4 **Country Residential:** this includes large rural lots relying on private wells and septic systems. This includes primarily single family residences with provisions for secondary suites, carriage houses and secondary dwellings.
- 3.1.5 **Rural Residential:** there are two areas with this designation: one area located south of the Oyster River, east of Old Island Highway and north of Regent Road, and a second in the Black Creek drainage area in the south eastern portion of the area plan boundaries. Given their topography, these areas serve an important role in the natural drainage of the Saratoga Miracle Beach area east of Old Island Highway, and host a significant number of riverine and estuarine features. As there is surface water present during many parts of the year, growth in these areas is limited. Prior to any development, a drainage report and a biophysical assessment are required to ensure the pre-development or natural hydrologic regime is maintained or restored by the development; and to assess potential water quality and quantity impacts.
- 3.1.6 **Tourist Commercial:** this category provides for coastal tourism activities including medium density tourist accommodations and related commercial activities including recreational facilities and accessory uses. A form and character development permit area is proposed to ensure compatibility of the form and character between new development and existing community.
- 3.1.7 **Employment Lands:** this designation provides for a range of expanded highway

commercial and light industrial uses along Old Island Highway and in select areas within the settlement node, as shown on Map 1. These are areas that currently serve as employment nodes, as well as some new areas set aside for future development. For the southern “employment lands” area, where the land serves as a gateway to the community, the highway corridor should be preserved with aesthetically pleasing commercial land uses fronting onto the Old Island Highway.

- 3.1.8 **Service Centres:** two areas have been designated as service areas as shown on Map 1. These are existing commercial centres that support future transit hubs, park and rides, and places of public assembly.
- 3.1.9 **200 Year Floodplain Area:** this area denotes the area that is likely to experience flooding at least once in every 200 years, and is based on the 1984, 200 year flood line data. New development or expansion of existing development within this area is subject to the floodplain bylaw and the provincial *Flood Hazard Area Land Use Management Guidelines Amendment*, January 1, 2018, to incorporate sea level rise.

3.2 Land Use Policies

- 3.2.1 Until community sewer is available, new lots created by subdivision must meet Vancouver Island Health Authority’s subdivision standards. The intent is to prolong the expected life of sewerage systems and safeguard the environment and public health. This policy reflects the findings of the *February 2016 Report on the 2015 Saratoga Beach Groundwater Monitoring Program*.
- 3.2.2 Higher density mixed residential development in the area west of Old Island Highway, designated as country residential is not recommended until the core development area has been sufficiently developed. Development in the core area first will support required thresholds to cover costs associated sewage services to this area.
- 3.2.3 The local area plan boundaries should be reviewed to consider inclusion of the Seaview Road area at such time as the RGS is under review. In accordance with MG 1B-4 of the RGS, amendments to the local area plan boundary would be considered a minor amendment to the RGS.
- 3.2.4 Coordinate and host a design charrette for the newly designated medium density mixed residential commercial area that provides for residents to participate in the redesign of the area and to complete detailed plans for redevelopment of this area.
- 3.2.5 Encourage that the construction of any new roads built within the settlement node are transit friendly, meeting standards which enable transit use. Road layouts should offer connections to and integrate with current community fabric. As the Old Island Highway provides a gateway to the community, aesthetically pleasing commercial uses should front onto this highway corridor.

4.2 Storm Water and Water Use Policies

- 4.2.1 All future developments should be required to comply with the *B.C. Supplement to the Transportation Association of Canada Geometric Design Guide for Canadian Roads (2007)* (PDF, 25MB, 510 pages - June 29, 2007 (design guidelines). These design guidelines administered by the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MoTI) are intended to prevent increased flood risks and stream erosion downstream of any future development.

<http://www.tac-atc.ca/en/publications-and-resources/geometric-design-guide-canadian-roads>

- 4.2.2 Where an on-site drainage report is required, the report should be prepared by a qualified professional to ensure the pre-development or natural hydrologic regime is maintained restored by the development in order to protect the functional values of stormwater management.
- 4.2.3 The water Balance Methodology should be used to control the rate and volume of future stormwater discharges as found here: <http://comox.waterbalance-express.ca/>
- 4.2.4 MoTI should be encouraged to enforce compliance of the design guidelines during approval of subdivisions and the issuance of any permits.
- 4.2.5 Enforcement of the design guidelines should be required as a condition of issuing a building permit.
- 4.2.6 The CVRD should undertake further analysis and monitoring of the drainage patterns in the Saratoga Miracle Beach area recognizing that future development, including subdivision and rezoning, may impact natural drainage patterns.
- 4.2.7 The CVRD should consider the creation of a Saratoga Miracle Beach tree cutting bylaw or a development permit area to ensure that any land alterations caused by tree removal are carried out in a way that maintains the natural drainage retention functions and properly manages on-site drainage management.
- 4.2.8 Where a biophysical assessment is required, the report should be prepared by a qualified professional in order to assess potential water quality and quantity impacts in order to protect the ecological values of the aquatic and riparian habitat.
- 4.2.9 The CVRD could assist in fostering partnerships with the Comox Valley Land Trust or other such agency to assist in providing for protection of the wetlands that are located on private lands.
- 4.2.10 The CVRD should continue to provide conservation incentives that lead to reductions in water use.

5.0 Climate Change and Sustainability Policies

- 5.1.1 Enable the retreat of the current tourist commercial area by supporting expansion of this area further away from the coastal area. The area has been designated as mixed medium density residential / commercial to provide for the medium density development to retreat. Designating this area for future mixed density residential / commercial uses does not affect the current uses; rather, it provides for other mixed residential / commercial uses further back from the area subject to flooding and storm surges.
- 5.1.2 Encourage completion of a modelling exercise to monitor and accurately define subsequent changes to the 200 year flood lines. Establishing better modelling of sea level rise and flood line is a good first step in coastal shoreline projection to help to avoid losses and property damage. Modeling will also be useful in the establishment of new setbacks to encourage a managed retreat of new development away from the shoreline areas.
- 5.1.3 Continue and expand conservation practices to reduce pressure on the aquifer and protect flows within the Oyster River including public education, water use restrictions, and

infrastructure improvements that reduce water consumption.

- 5.2.1 Upon requests for rezoning, seek opportunities to provide for improved connectivity, such as enhanced cycling networks and pedestrian walkways, in accordance with the priorities set out in the transportation road network plan.
- 5.2.2 Continue to work with the community to provide incentives that achieve sustainability targets, such as reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, as set out in the Comox Valley Sustainability Strategy, the RGS and the Climate Action Plan.
- 5.2.3 Consider establishment of a Saratoga Miracle Beach sustainability service to accrue funds by way of tax requisitions, amenity contributions and grant funding to support recreation and sustainability initiatives.

6.0 Housing Policies

- 6.1 Continue to support and enable infill development including secondary suites, carriage houses and secondary dwellings through zoning. This plan recommends that these provisions continue as measures to provide for affordable housing, aging in place and supportive living arrangements, and to support aspirations for the area to support moderate growth with higher density over time.

7.0 Parks and Trails Policies

- 7.1 Pursue development of additional pedestrian routes and trails to improve connectivity to the Miracle Beach Elementary School, transit connections, commercial/service centres, existing and future parks, and the waterfront; and better pedestrian and cycling infrastructure along Miracle Beach Drive and Clarkson Avenue.
- 7.2 Seek opportunities to improve parking and washroom facilities (additional comfort station) adjacent to Saratoga Miracle Beach for easier public access to beach areas.
- 7.3 Improve and open public beach access by continued progress towards objectives and priorities in the CVRD beach access study.
- 7.4 Support use of public facilities for cultural, social and recreational activities, and educational opportunities.

8.0 Transportation Policies

- 8.2.1 Encourage better connectivity within the community and from the area shown as the core area on Map 1. This includes better access to Miracle Beach Drive, Saratoga Road and Regent Road to ensure access is in place prior to approval of new multi lot subdivisions.
- 8.2.2 Encourage the Province to require the creation of a secondary access in any multi lot subdivisions including Saratoga Beach Estates in phase one and two.
- 8.2.3 Encourage the Province to work with the CVRD to repurpose Clarkson Avenue to better balance pedestrian and resident needs by limiting parking to one side of the road and constructing a bike path/pedestrian walkway within the Clarkson Avenue right of way on the other side by:

- a. Limiting parking to only one side of Clarkson Avenue,
 - b. Constructing pedestrian/cycling trail on one side of Clarkson Avenue,
 - c. Reducing speed limit by adding traffic calming devices and signs, and
 - d. Constructing additional and more organized public parking on Seaman Road, Eyre Road, Laval Road and the northeast bend of Clarkson Avenue.
- 8.2.4 Encourage MoTI to provide for public use of any unopened road right of ways for using that could include parking, comfort stations and public access and limit the issuance permits that impede public access.
- 8.2.5 Encourage MoTI to plan for and implement upgrades to Oyster River Way to make this road as a collector road as shown on Map 5 so that Oyster River Way can become a thoroughfare to Miracle Beach Drive and out to Highway 19A. This includes encouraging the Province to require any new development in the area, including subdivisions, to contribute towards the creation of Oyster River Way and Miracle Beach Drive as a collector road as a key component of the future transportation network for Saratoga Miracle Beach as a settlement node. This should extend south of McLarey Avenue and east of Highway 19A, including a transportation intersection at the junction of Miracle Beach Drive and Highway 19A.
- 8.2.6 Encourage MoTI to conduct a further traffic analysis of the area, in light of the growth projections of the local area plan, the OCP and the RGS to determine suitable new networks.
- 8.2.7 Require transportation impact studies for all multi-lot residential and commercial subdivisions.
- 8.2.8 Encourage developers of large-scale development to construct pedestrian, bicycle and transit improvement, as identified in this local area plan.
- 8.2.9 Encourage MoTI to allow, by way of permits, an iconic community gateway signage within the Highway 19A right of way at Saratoga Beach Road and Miracle Beach Drive as gateway markers and to profile the entrances to the community.
- 8.2.10 Encourage MoTI to upgrade the Oyster River Bridge at Regent Road in accordance with section 23(3) of the OCP, or replace bridge to accommodate two-way vehicle traffic, increase load limit to accommodate buses, and include a dedicated multi-use facility to accommodate walking and cycling.
- 8.2.11 Encourage the Province to avoid cul-de-sacs in the approval of multi-lot subdivisions to encourage active living, community walkability and trail connectivity.
- 8.2.12 Support any “safe routes to schools” projects for areas surrounding Miracle Beach Elementary School by working with school district and parent advisory committee.
- 8.2.13 Encourage MoTI to reduce speed limits on priority roads in the Miracle Beach service centre. Additionally, obtain a speed reader board and install it in locations with high incidence of speeding, entrances to the community and school zones.
- 8.3.1 Support growth of the two existing area service centres, including one at the current Oyster River commercial centre across the Oyster River (Discovery Foods) and a second one close to Miracle Beach Drive and Old Island Highway (mini golf and racetrack facilities). These centres will serve as central transportation centres where a range of services can be provided

including transit stops, park and ride facilities, bike storage, electric vehicles and ride share and/or car stop stations.

- 8.3.2 Seek opportunities for grant funding, in cooperation with MoTI, to provide for improved pedestrian and cycling infrastructure throughout the area (Map 6). The short term focus is area east of the Old Island Highway and the long term focus is area west of the Old Island Highway. This will reduce greenhouse gas emissions, provide residents and tourists with improved transportation opportunities and encourage healthy living.
- 8.3.3 Section 5.1 of the *CVRD Transportation Road Network Plan, 2014* identifies specific roads within the Saratoga Miracle Beach community as priority roadside greenway routes. Roadside greenways are multi-use routes contained within a maintained road right-of-way either with a separated pathway or widened road shoulders. Table 2 is a list of relevant priority roadside greenway routes.

9.0 Community Amenity Policies

- 9.1.1 Improved road and transit access within the settlement node in accordance with the road network plan included in this local area plan.
- 9.1.2 Improved trails, greenways to promote connectivity and walkability throughout the settlement node.
- 9.1.3 Design, construction and implementation of iconic neighborhood signs to mark the entry points to the community at both north and south end points on Highway 19A.
- 9.1.4 Water capacity measures that identify alternative sources and conservations incentive based measures to preserve and protect the existing supply.
- 9.1.5 Public washroom facilities in close proximity to the beach.
- 9.1.6 Public parking in proximity to the beach.
- 9.1.7 Multi-level care supports to meet social and recreational needs related to aging in place.
- 9.1.8 Improved transportation corridors with separated pedestrian and cycling opportunities.

10. Economic Development Policies

- 10.1.1 Support year round operations of tourist commercial in conjunction with adequate servicing.
- 10.1.2 Do not support rezoning of existing tourist commercial properties to residential uses.
- 10.1.3 Collect more precise data base regarding tourist needs, user satisfaction surveys, numbers, and activities and in the Saratoga Miracle Beach area, including the Miracle Beach Provincial Park, tourist satisfaction, service needs, etc. in order to inform future investment decisions that in turn, could support the interests of the community by way of amenities. This data could be collected by the CVRD through its service provider, the Comox Valley Economic Development Society, or another agency.
- 10.1.4 Support home based businesses that balance employment opportunities with the rural character of the neighborhood, in compliance with the Comox Valley zoning bylaw requirements.
- 10.1.5 Facilitate the development of Saratoga Beach Estates, and associated sewer treatment plan

facilities, in accordance with the current or a revised master development agreement.

11. Future Local Area Plan Review

- 11.1.1 Review the Saratoga Miracle Beach local area plan within five to seven years in order to accommodate any new findings of initiatives currently underway, and given the importance of these initiatives to the long term growth, health and social well-being of the community.

Saratoga Miracle Beach Local Area Plan



January 2018

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Executive Summary

This local area plan encourages medium density residential and commercial growth in the Saratoga Miracle Beach area, with an aim to create a livable, walkable rural residential community. The plan proposes low growth in order to retain the character of the area as a rural coastal community while allowing for some local commercial and light industrial services at a scale that supports some services and employment for local residents and seasonal beachside tourists.

A commercial form and character development permit area is proposed for new areas designated for medium density mixed commercial and residential development, and tourist commercial. The intent is to retain the beachfront resort form and character for future development.

Drinking water capacity emerged early on in the planning process as a concern pertaining to growth options. The area is primarily served by the Black Creek Oyster Bay (BCOB) water service, a regional district service that is owned and operated by the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD). The BCOB water service draws water in combination from the Oyster River and two ground water wells. The system supplies water to nearly 1,000 households in CVRD Electoral Area C and Electoral Area D in the Strathcona Regional District (SRD). Due to limited water capacity in recent years, hydrological assessments of the BCOB local water service area were conducted. By January 2018, a test well was drilled in the Oyster River Nature Park to assess the potential yield of a new well. The CVRD is working with consultants and the SRD on the drilling of the production well.

The privately owned system, Watutco Water Service, provides water service to another 143 households and two commercial operations in the area, Pacific Playgrounds and the Saratoga Beach Mobile Home Park. In 2015, the owner of this system provided a written request for the CVRD to take over that system, and the CVRD is currently carrying out a feasibility study on that request to determine next steps.

No sewage system is currently in place for the area, and properties are serviced by on-site septic systems. During the course of developing this plan, the CVRD conducted a study to determine failing on-site septic system rates. Results from the *February 2016 Report on the 2015 Saratoga Beach Groundwater Monitoring Program*, have informed this plan. There were some areas, approximately 220 lots that were identified as having septic fields that were approaching the end of their fully functioning life. At some point, should a sewage service become available, an area is identified in this local area plan as a core development area, where future growth would be directed in order to support the costs of a sewage system in this core area.

The board approved the Saratoga Beach Estates Master Development Agreement (MDA) in 2011 which sets out conditions and terms for construction of a sewage treatment facility by the owner of the Saratoga Beach Estates. The MDA aims to enable development activities to

Photo credit: Bruce Pirrie

occur and spur development within the community. In December 2017 the board approved revisions to that MDA intended to set in place terms for the 143 lot subdivision at Saratoga Beach Estates to proceed along with extra capacity in the Saratoga Beach Estates sewage treatment plant for the additional 220 properties with failing septic fields, should those properties wish to obtain sewage treatment. At that point, the CVRD would likely seek to transfer the ownership of that infrastructure and create a service for the total 363 properties including other properties by way of an expanded service area.

Floodplain mapping was completed to project likely sea level rise patterns over 100 years. It is projected that the coastline of eastern Vancouver Island will rise by approximately one metre by 2115. A more immediate concern is increased frequency and force of storm surges. The plan recommends expanding the density in and around the existing tourist commercial activities westward to provide for long term commercial options away from the coastal area. This recommendation also provides for mixed medium density residential / commercial activities along that strip that is further inland than the current commercial coastal properties.

In 2017, the CVRD commissioned the Saratoga Wetlands study that looked at the general drainage patterns of the ditches, streams and wetlands, east of the Island Highway. These are natural assets to manage, filter, manage and retain stormwater flow. The study establishes the base flow patterns and volumes. As such, future development needs to use onsite drainage management features to ensure that any post-development stormwater flow does not exceed the pre-development flow. The plan recommends that the CVRD consider establishing policy and bylaw tools to manage area drainage in order to support new development. This could include the creation of a local stormwater service area be established and a tree removal bylaw to ensure that any land alterations are done in such a way as to recognize the importance of the Saratoga wetlands to this area as a natural asset. It could also consider a partnership with the Comox Valley Land Trust or other such agency to protect the area's that are on private lands over the long term.

In an effort to achieve progress on the CVRD sustainability goals, as contained in the Comox Valley Sustainability Strategy, the plan contains a series of transportation recommendations in line with the goals and objectives of the CVRD Parks and Greenways Plan, and is intended to develop a more connected, walkable community that protects the recreational aspirations of the community. This includes improving pedestrian walkways, cycling infrastructure and connectivity to the highlights and features of the community, such as the Miracle Beach Elementary School, resorts, beaches, parks and greenspace.

This plan should be reviewed again within five to seven years, depending on how fast growth proceeds in the area.



Part 1: Background and Introduction

The Saratoga Miracle Beach settlement node is a rural residential community located midway between the City of Courtenay and the City of Campbell River, approximately 30 minutes from each community by car. Located within the CVRD, this seaside community borders the Strait of Georgia to the east and the Oyster River along its northern boundary. Highway 19A (Old Island Highway) passes through the middle.

1.1 Plan Area Boundaries

The settlement node boundaries were defined in the 2011 CVRD RGS (RGS), establishing Saratoga Miracle Beach as one of three settlement nodes intended to accommodate compact development in rural areas not contiguous with the three municipal areas of the Comox Valley. The other two settlement nodes are Mount Washington and Union Bay, each of which is intended to have its own local area plan to direct future growth. The area boundaries of this settlement node and of this local area plan are shown on Map 1.

Prior to the RGS, Schedule C of Bylaw No. 2042, being the “Rural Comox Valley Official Community Plan, 1998,” (OCP) included an area plan for the Saratoga Miracle Beach area, known as the “Electoral Area ‘C’ Land Use and Greenways Plan and Saratoga Miracle Beach Local Area Plan”. With the adoption of Bylaw No. 337, being the “Rural Comox Valley Official Community Plan Bylaw No. 337, 2014,” that earlier local area plan was rescinded, to be replaced with this local area plan.

1.2 Local Area Plan Purpose

The Saratoga Miracle Beach Local Area Plan provides policy and land use guidance over and above those policies found in the OCP. This area plan reflects the communities’ vision for

Photo credit: Bruce Pirrie

the future as a settlement node within the area, in accordance with the 2011 CVRD RGS. This plan will direct future growth in the Saratoga Miracle Beach settlement node over the next 20 years, in terms of how and where growth will emerge.

1.3 Community Context and Land Use (2015)

The Saratoga Miracle Beach settlement node is located in the Puntledge - Black Creek area, (Electoral Area C). It is a well-established community with approximately 1,600 people. Residents value the rural nature of the area, its proximity to Campbell River and Courtenay, and nearby Saratoga and Miracle Beaches. The provincial park at Miracle Beach and resorts along Saratoga Beach also make the area very popular as a tourist recreational destination. The boundaries were established by the CVRD RGS in 2011 and any change to the local area plan boundaries requires an amendment to that strategy.

Demographics: The resident population rises significantly between May and September with the influx of tourists and visitors to the beaches and amenities of the area. The Miracle Beach Provincial Park, a 137 hectare provincial park directly south of the plan area boundaries, draws as many as 35,000 people during the month of August, the park's busiest month and when the park is at 99 per cent of its capacity. In 2013, this included approximately 18,000 overnight campers and 15,000 day users. The community regards this influx as a natural response to the area's beauty because it is what initially drew them to the area as well. In addition to the beaches, fishing in the Oyster River and hiking local trails are valued area recreational opportunities. Residents have indicated they value the area for its large open spaces, forests and dark skies. A number of unopened road right of ways exists and are used informally as beach access and other pedestrian networks which the community would like to see formalized and protected as public space.

General Land Uses: Current land use patterns in the area, based on 2014 BC Assessment data, show primarily residential uses, with approximately 14 tourist commercially zoned properties along the Strait of Georgia coastline. This includes 12 properties with a range of beachfront rental cabins that offer rustic family vacation rentals as well as Pacific Playgrounds Resort which includes a 201 lot serviced recreational vehicle park, 20 rental cottages and a marina. A privately owned golf course is also located within the central area of the community. The Saratoga Beach Mobile Home Park is located south of Saratoga Beach Road with approximately 43 year round residential units on rented mobile home pads. This property is serviced by a private onsite septic field and water is provided by the privately owned Watutco Enterprises Ltd. Other community amenities include seasonal commercial uses along the west side of Old Island Highway which bisects the settlement node boundaries. This commercial complex includes the popular Saratoga Speedway with a racetrack that hosts several island wide speedway races throughout the summer, monster truck rides, go-cart rentals on a daily basis during the summer season and some seasonal restaurant services.

Water Sources: Residents of Saratoga Miracle Beach consume groundwater from groundwater aquifers in the BCOB area. The Province of British Columbia (Province) operates a provincial observation well network to monitor groundwater availability in areas of high growth and occupancy. These observation wells are monitored over time to provide information on how much groundwater is available given human use patterns, aquifer

characteristics and weather and climate patterns.¹

One of these wells is in the Oyster River area, known as observation well number 369, Oyster River gravel pit. This 24 foot well was primarily intended for the purposes of monitoring potential effects of coal bed methane extraction. Water level data from this well can be viewed on the observation well network interactive map found on the Government of BC's website.

Overall, since it was drilled in 2005 there has been no significant change in the seasonal response within the well. This location is adjacent to the inland highway and at higher elevation compared to Saratoga Miracle Beach so it may not directly correlate to observations within aquifers at lower elevation. In May 2015 the CVRD commenced a hydrological assessment of the area to determine the long term capacity of the water resources in the Black Creek Oyster River area. This work commenced in response to two particularly low snow fall and rain fall record years in 2013-2014 and 2014-2015.

The results of this work, along with continued monitoring of observation well number 369 have informed the CVRD of the water resources in the area and on prudent future density and growth patterns of the area. Water use patterns in BC show a decrease in the estimated residential water use per person from 465 litres per person per day in 1991 to 426 litres per person per day in 2004; however, the use continues to be above the Canadian national average of 329, putting BC in the top bracket of water-using provinces.²

Currently, the Saratoga Miracle Beach area is serviced by two water systems, the BCOB water local service area, operated jointly by the CVRD and the SRD, and the Watutco water system, a privately owned system that is operated by Watutco Enterprises Ltd.

The BCOB water system is the larger of the two systems, providing water to 2,200 area residents and extending as far south as Black Creek and north into the SRD Electoral Area D past Kuhushan Point. The BCOB system services nearly 1,000 households, and is owned and operated by the CVRD. The BCOB system is approaching its capacity and water availability is viewed as a limiting factor for new growth in this area. Due to limited water capacity in recent years, hydrological assessments of the BCOB local water service area were conducted. By January 2018, a test well was drilled in the Oyster River Nature Park to assess the potential yield of a new well. Based on the results from the test well, the CVRD is working with consultants and the SRD to determine the drilling of the production well.

The second system is privately owned and operated by Watutco Enterprises Ltd. It services approximately 143 households and the two commercial operations of Pacific Playgrounds and the Saratoga Beach Mobile Home Park. Some users of the Watutco water system have expressed dissatisfaction regarding the volumes of water, water quality and concerns about minimum fire insurance requirements. In particular, the 2009 Fire Protection Service Study commissioned by the CVRD showed that the Watutco water distribution systems lacks adequate storage to provide for minimum fire-fighting.³ The owners of the private Watutco Enterprises system had advised that some upgrades to the system would be required over

¹ <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/soe/indicators/water/groundwater-levels.html>

² Source: Min of Environment, 2007, SOE Environmental Trends in BC

³ Fire Protection Service Study, CVRD, CGI Municipal Consulting Services, 2009

Photo credit: Bruce Pirrie

the next several years to meet the Vancouver Island Health Authority 4-3-2-1 - Drinking Water Treatment for Surface Water Policy standards. In December 2015, the owners submitted a written request to the CVRD to transfer the Watutco water system to the CVRD. The CVRD is currently assessing that system, in accordance with CVRD policy, *Transfer of water systems to the regional district*. (Policy 5600-00 June 2004), to determine next steps.

The most recent assessment of global climate change from the International Panel on Climate Change reflects a high degree of consensus among scientists that earth's atmosphere is warming. Projected and observed changes include increasing frequency and severity of extreme weather (heat waves, drought, and high-intensity rainfall), changes in river flow, increased flood risk, increased wildfire risk, shrinking glaciers and snow packs at most locations, rising sea level, and alteration of ocean temperature, salinity, and density.

BC Ministry of the Environment data also shows precipitation may increase marginally over most of the province during winter, which is when much of the total rainfall for the year occurs. Summers however, may become drier over much of the coast, especially in the south. On an annual basis, the entire province may become wetter. Less of the winter precipitation is likely to fall as snow, particularly at low elevations, because of the predicted rise in temperature. There is some evidence that rainfall events are increasing in intensity (the amount of rain per unit time) and in magnitude.⁴

Water continues to be an overarching concern of this plan as snow cap levels at the headwaters of the Oyster River create long term concern about the Oyster River's flow regime, both in terms of the community water supply and the long term health of the river. As the river is a source of drinking water to residents, offers recreational values and is also a viable fish bearing habitat, this trend is important to understand and monitor. The natural processes of the Oyster River continue to be impacted by land development, proposed coal mines and logging within its watershed that also affects runoff rates and water quality.

Sensitive Ecosystem Inventory: In preparation of the OCP, a sensitive ecosystem inventory assessment was conducted by Comox Valley Conservation Strategy Community Partnership (Map 2 of the OCP). This was the third assessment, in which the first and the second were completed in 1993 and 2002, respectively. Within the local area plan area, three sensitive ecosystem types exist: riparian ecosystem, sparsely vegetated and wetland (Map 2). Riparian ecosystem consists of soils and plants that feed, cool and stabilize aquatic environment. This ecosystem exists in areas adjacent to Oyster River, with a large area on provincial land east of the Old Island Highway. Sparsely vegetated ecosystem consists of sandy, gravelly or rocky areas along the coast where plants are just established. This ecosystem exists on the northeastern tip of Pacific Playgrounds and extends into the sea. Wetland ecosystem exists mostly on the southeastern portion of the local area plan area, where water is drained into the Strait of Georgia. The local area plan recognizes these natural features with applicable land use designations.

Drainage Patterns: Saratoga Wetlands, located in the southeastern corner of the plan area,

⁴ Ministry of Environment "Environmental Trends 2007: State of the Environment Report"

Photo credit: Bruce Pirrie

provide an important natural water detention and drainage function for the area. These are natural assets to manage, filter, manage and retain stormwater flow. As such, the CVRD commissioned a study in 2017 to establish the base flow patterns and volumes of the drainage system. Future development needs to use onsite drainage management features, so that post-development stormwater flow does not exceed the pre-development flow.

Environmental Inventory of Watercourses and Wetlands: In support of the drainage study, an environmental inventory study was completed for watercourses and wetlands. In this community, there are two high-value wetland areas: Saratoga Wetlands bounded by Miracle Beach Drive, Paulsen Road and Clarkson Avenue; and Black Creek Slough wetlands bounded by Maple Drive, Driftwood Road and Clarkson Avenue. The Saratoga Wetlands maintains water quality and buffer water flow. This system supports and provides habitat for salmonids, red-listed slough sedges and red alders. There are patches of mature (~110 years old) forest surrounding the central area. The Black Creek Slough wetlands also maintain water quality and buffer water flow, which support salmonid populations. There are blue listed great blue heron nest sites in the vicinity.

Other inventoried watercourses and wetlands include Black Creek, Saratoga Golf Course watercourse and Pacific Playgrounds wetland. Black Creek supports populations of coho, chum, cutthroat, rainbow trout and steelhead. The perennial flow provides rearing and forage habitats for out-migrating juvenile salmonids as well as blue-listed Caspian terns, great blue herons, surf scoters, California gulls, double crested cormorants and yellow-listed horned grebes. The Saratoga Golf Course watercourse provides perennial flows for fish and wildlife species. A piped stream section conveys flows underneath a cleared area of a nearby subdivision, which indicates a possible loss of summer rearing habitat for 1.5 kilometres of the stream channel. The Pacific Playgrounds wetland is a large wetland that provides unique, perennially wetted habitat for coho salmon and mustelids. This area may be tidally influenced and the water table may be strongly influenced by ocean levels. Two great blue heron nests were reported in the vicinity.

On-site Septic Services: No sewer system currently exists for the area and properties are serviced by on-site septic systems. Concerns have been expressed by residents that a number of these systems are failing due to deferred maintenance or due to having reached the end of their expected life. The CVRD undertook a groundwater monitoring program in the Saratoga Miracle Beach settlement node in order to evaluate the overall performance of onsite sewerage systems in the area.

The groundwater monitoring program, which commenced in the spring of 2015, was intended to evaluate the overall failure rate of onsite treatment systems within the Saratoga Miracle Beach settlement node based on testing of groundwater quality downslope of the developed areas. Nitrate levels and *Escherichia coli* (*E-coli*) bacteria concentration in the monitoring wells were used as indicators for groundwater contamination due to failed onsite treatment systems. The study area included approximately 598 households.

The study showed an overall onsite treatment system failure rate of 19 per cent based on groundwater quality for the entire study area. All of the failed wells were located within a densely developed zone (defined in the groundwater monitoring program report as “designate area”) roughly between the foreshore and the Saratoga Beach Estates property.

Photo credit: Bruce Pirrie

The majority of this zone falls within the core development area outlined in Map 1 but also includes residential homes located immediately south of Maple Drive. Six out of 12 testing wells within this zone failed to meet or exceed the project specified water quality objectives. In addition to the poorly maintained, aging or undersized septic systems, these relatively high failure rates are exacerbated by high lot densities and high seasonal water table. Based on these results, the study concluded there was no urgent need for a publicly owned treatment system to service the entire settlement node based on widespread failure, though one problem area in particular was identified. The study recommended some options for those properties including a communal wastewater treatment system if subsequent engineering studies demonstrate feasibility.

Saratoga Beach Estates Master Development Agreement: A Master Development Agreement is in place for the area known as Saratoga Beach Estates since 2011. The agreement is between the CVRD and Saratoga Beach Estates Inc. and provides for 143 single family households. In May 2017, the owner requested changes to the MDA that included a reduction in size of the sewage treatment plant and expansion capacity and a reduction in the park dedication due to changes in the OCP requirements. The CVRD approved revisions and in that process identified the areas to be set aside as parkland and trails, as shown in Map 3.

The agreement requires the developer to construct a community sewage treatment plant which would be turned over to the CVRD to own and operate, and this was negotiated as an amenity contribution to the community in exchange for the increased density. The agreement requires a capacity of the treatment system to accommodate a total of 700 persons, including the 143 households included within the SBE master development agreement, and to be built on a site that can allow for future expansion. The agreement restricts subdivision of the comprehensive development zone lands until the sewage treatment plan has been constructed, to the satisfaction of the CVRD, or 125 per cent of the cost has been provided to the CVRD for its construction of the facility. Zoning is already in place to enable the developer to proceed with this development.

Population Projections: Saratoga Miracle Beach, like other rural areas of the CVRD, has an aging population. Over time, households have become smaller, with smaller families and fewer occupants. Residents have expressed an interest for more housing opportunities in the rural areas to enable them to live out their life in the rural setting of Saratoga Miracle Beach. Best options include modifying homes to accommodate caregivers, provide for changing and reduced mobility, establishing assisted living facilities and providing for higher density housing as an alternative to the primarily single family dwellings that now exist. Improving public transit and the walkability of the community through provision of recreational trails that connect key destinations within the community has also been expressed by residents as something that will contribute to their quality of life as they age. Detailed population projections for the settlement node, as reflected in the OCP project a slight decrease in population, all things being equal, and therefore some of the growth policies in this plan are intended to encourage and foster growth and to support an expanded beach tourism commercial industry in order to turn that around.

Miracle Beach Elementary School: The Saratoga Miracle Beach area is served by the Miracle Beach Elementary School from Kindergarten to Grade 7, which falls within School District No. 71. In 2016, 187 children from within this catchment area were registered as attending

Photo credit: Bruce Pirrie

Miracle Beach Elementary. An additional 20 students attend from the adjacent catchment areas and from other catchment areas within the Comox Valley for a total of 207 students registered in the school in the 2016-2017 school year. School District No. 71 is completing a long range plan for 2017-2022 which could provide further projections, once complete.

Transit: The CVRD, along with BC Transit, operates a bus service to the area. Currently, the number 12 route, North Valley Connector does five trips to Oyster River each weekday from downtown Courtenay, with two trips on Saturdays. Full schedule information is available on BC Transit's website.



1.4 RGS Objectives

The designation of Saratoga Miracle Beach as a settlement node in the 2011 RGS envisioned some transition of the community. Settlement nodes were designated as core settlement areas intended to absorb 90 per cent of the new growth and development in the Comox Valley with the rural areas absorbing 10 per cent of the growth in order to preserve the rural, agricultural and resource areas for as long as possible.

The CVRD RGS established a policy framework to accommodate growth through a balance of new development, densification and improvements to public infrastructure, primarily water, sewer and transit. This policy framework includes targets and policies intended to increase affordable housing options, introduce more diversity in the types of housing available and to ensure that new developments occur as part of complete and sustainable communities, close to existing services.

The RGS is a forward looking strategy over twenty years, (2010-2030). It includes policies to encourage new housing away from high risk natural hazard areas, including flood plains, steep slopes and area exposed to sea-level rise, and supports efforts to focus new investment and business development in town centres. In particular, policy MG 1B-1 states that the Saratoga Miracle Beach settlement node shall accommodate growth through a balance of

Photo credit: Bruce Pirrie

new development, intensification and improvements to public infrastructure, including water, sewer, enhanced public transit and active transportation services. New growth is intended to be largely geared towards coastal tourism and residential housing, per policy MG 1A-1 (1. (b)). The RGS further requires that a local plan be adopted to direct growth towards a compact, livable community. This plan recognizes the targets included in the RGS and recommends a moderate increase in medium density housing, and recognizes that the high density housing targets included in the RGS are not appropriate at this time due the water capacity and the still primarily rural character of the community. Medium density housing includes a mixture of single unit residential, town homes, semi-detached units, secondary suites, carriage houses and secondary dwellings, with density patterns of between four to 24 units per hectare.

1.5 Time Frame of the Local Area Plan

Growth patterns are cognizant of the need for increased water supply, while recognizing that improved transit, sewer services and improved recreational opportunities require some new growth to offset costs for those services, over time. Accordingly, this plan assumes a five to seven year time frame.

Part 2: Local Area Planning Objectives

Residents in the Saratoga Miracle Beach area wish to maintain the peaceful setting of the community by protecting the values that attracted people to the community in the first place. This includes the Oyster River, the beaches and the rural nature of the community and by increasing beach access, parking and comfort stations in the vicinity of the beach.

A key objective of this plan is to ensure short and long term development proposals are reviewed in light of their impacts on the existing aquifer and water capacity and existing residential needs. The plan encourages growth that is serviced by publicly owned water and sewer servicing. Residents have expressed an interest to enhance and protect the existing network of parks, greenways, pedestrian and cycling corridors in the community, with particular attention to safe pedestrian access to Miracle Beach Elementary School and local beaches.

The continued and expanded use of existing services centres, in accordance with the goals and objectives in the RGS and OCP, will serve as local community hubs for a range of community services are seen as desirable. These services include improved transit, and medical services and appropriately scaled commercial opportunities that serve the local community. Highway oriented commercial activities should be directed along Old Island Highway.

This plan incorporates climate change adaptation strategies as being strong companions to future development and land use, with particular attention to sea level rise and future impacts along the shoreline due to increasing winter storm surges.

Photo credit: Bruce Pirrie

Finally, the community wishes to see a range of affordable housing types to enable the community to become more age-friendly with increased and more diverse housing opportunities, safe walking trails and designated areas as service centres for medical and other appropriate services within the community. Community priorities for future amenities have been reflected in this plan and include but are not limited to specific areas for future parks and greenways.

Future development should include higher density areas. While the 2011 RGS included recommendations for increased density with buildings over four stories and density levels of up to 74 units per hectare, in accordance with the growth management policies of the RGS, this plan recommends that the CVRD defer progress on achieving that level of density development until such time as the community has grown thorough infill and when these densities would be viewed by residents as a good community fit.



Part 3: Growth and Land Use Policies

Substantive growth of the Saratoga Miracle Beach settlement node will only happen when there is increased water capacity work and full sewage services.

3.1 Land Use Designations

Future land use and development is recommended in accordance with Map 1, as follows.

- 3.1.1 **Core Development Area:** this is the town centre of the settlement node. It is intended to grow to become a walkable, compact community core that includes a broad mix of residential, mixed medium density residential, commercial and employment land uses. The area will eventually be fully serviced with publicly owned

Photo credit: Bruce Pirrie

- services.
- 3.1.2 **Residential:** this includes small lot neighbourhoods with primarily single family residences with provisions for secondary dwellings and secondary suites with density levels at between four to 24 units per hectare subject to the availability of water and sewer services. The Saratoga Beach Estates master development agreement with supportive zoning is already in place in a portion of this designation.
- 3.1.3 **Mixed Medium Density Residential / Commercial:** this area is designated to provide for the expansion of beach resort tourist commercial development, and medium mixed residential and commercial development over the long term. The designation is intended to encourage growth and development of a range of residential development, vacation rentals, and tourist commercial activities at medium density levels. Designating this area does not affect the existing uses and instead allows for redevelopment of the area with higher densities, such as multifamily, townhouses, condominiums and other commercial uses over time. This designation recognizes that while the projected rate of sea level rise of approximately one metre by 2115 is unlikely to impact the area on its own, increasing winter storm surges and flooding patterns are likely, and as a result, the new designation provides for ample area for increased investment back from the coastal area once servicing is available. A commercial form and character development permit area is proposed to ensure compatibility of the form and character between development and existing community.
- 3.1.4 **Country Residential:** this includes large rural lots relying on private wells and septic systems. This includes primarily single family residences with provisions for secondary suites, carriage houses and secondary dwellings.
- 3.1.5 **Rural Residential:** there are two areas with this designation: one area located south of the Oyster River, east of Old Island Highway and north of Regent Road, and a second in the Black Creek drainage area in the south eastern portion of the area plan boundaries. Given their topography, these areas serve an important role in the natural drainage of the Saratoga Miracle Beach area east of Old Island Highway, and host a significant number of riverine and estuarine features. As there is surface water present during many parts of the year, growth in these areas is limited. Prior to any development, a drainage report and a biophysical assessment are required to ensure the pre-development or natural hydrologic regime is maintained or restored by the development; and to assess potential water quality and quantity impacts.
- 3.1.6 **Tourist Commercial:** this category provides for coastal tourism activities including medium density tourist accommodations and related commercial activities including recreational facilities and accessory uses. A form and character development permit area is proposed to ensure compatibility of the form and character between new

Photo credit: Bruce Pirrie

- development and existing community.
- 3.1.7 **Employment Lands:** this designation provides for a range of expanded highway commercial and light industrial uses along Old Island Highway and in select areas within the settlement node, as shown on Map 1. These are areas that currently serve as employment nodes, as well as some new areas set aside for future development. For the southern “employment lands” area, where the land serves as a gateway to the community, the highway corridor should be preserved with aesthetically pleasing commercial land uses fronting onto the Old Island Highway.
- 3.1.8 **Service Centres:** two areas have been designated as service areas as shown on Map 1. These are existing commercial centres that support future transit hubs, park and rides, and places of public assembly.
- 3.1.9 **200 Year Floodplain Area:** this area denotes the area that is likely to experience flooding at least once in every 200 years, and is based on the 1984, 200 year flood line data. New development or expansion of existing development within this area is subject to the floodplain bylaw and the provincial *Flood Hazard Area Land Use Management Guidelines Amendment*, January 1, 2018, to incorporate sea level rise.
- 3.2 Land Use Policies**
- 3.2.1 Until community sewer is available, new lots created by subdivision must meet Vancouver Island Health Authority’s subdivision standards. The intent is to prolong the expected life of sewerage systems and safeguard the environment and public health. This policy reflects the findings of the *February 2016 Report on the 2015 Saratoga Beach Groundwater Monitoring Program*.
- 3.2.2 Higher density mixed residential development in the area west of Old Island Highway, designated as country residential is not recommended until the core development area has been sufficiently developed. Development in the core area first will support required thresholds to cover costs associated sewage services to this area.
- 3.2.3 The local area plan boundaries should be reviewed to consider inclusion of the Seaview Road area at such time as the RGS is under review. In accordance with MG 1B-4 of the RGS, amendments to the local area plan boundary would be considered a minor amendment to the RGS.
- 3.2.4 Coordinate and host a design charrette for the newly designated medium density mixed residential commercial area that provides for residents to participate in the redesign of the area and to complete detailed plans for redevelopment of this area.
- 3.2.5 Encourage that the construction of any new roads built within the settlement node

Photo credit: Bruce Pirrie

are transit friendly, meeting standards which enable transit use. Road layouts should offer connections to and integrate with current community fabric. As the Old Island Highway provides a gateway to the community, aesthetically pleasing commercial uses should front onto this highway corridor.



Part 4: Stormwater Management and Water Protection Policies

4.1 Stormwater Management

Part of preserving the community's character includes providing environmental protection for the Oyster River and Saratoga Miracle Beach. The Oyster River is important as a source of drinking water, recreation, and as a salmon stream.

There are two high value wetland complexes within the Saratoga Miracle Beach local area plan boundaries. This includes the Saratoga Clarkson wetlands that are bounded by Miracle Beach Drive, Paulsen Road and Clarkson Avenue. The second wetlands are those surrounding the Black Creek slough, bounded by Maple Drive, Driftwood Road and Clarkson Avenue. These areas serve as a barrier to flow, in that that they detain large volumes of water, and serve two important functions. First, they reduce the discharges of water flows during the winter months and provide important flood protection to downstream areas. Second, the area serves to improve the quality of the discharges by way of filtration and by providing for a nutrient uptake. This in turn provides for a rich natural habitat for birds, fish, small mammals and plants.

Both of these wetlands serve as natural assets that benefit all residents of the Saratoga Beach area. For those reasons, the plan recommends protecting these natural assets from future development in order to provide for natural and effective drainage in the area.

Photo credit: Bruce Pirrie

Continued growth in the Saratoga Miracle Beach Settlement Node has the potential to increase the rate and volume of stormwater flowing downstream unless new provisions are in place to manage stormwater along its path by way of retaining natural vegetation and trees for stormwater absorption and retention.

There are a number of policy and bylaw tools that the CVRD should consider to manage area drainage over the long term in order to support new development and also recognize these wetlands as important natural assets. This includes further analysis of natural drainage patterns to ensure effective management of stormwater in the Saratoga Miracle Beach area. Also, given that trees and vegetation provide for soil retention and assist in the natural ability of an area to absorb water, the creation of a tree removal bylaw for this area would ensure that any land alterations were done in such a way as to recognize the importance of the Saratoga wetlands to the area as a natural asset. Finally, as much of the wetland area is privately owned, partnership with the Comox Valley Land Trust to protect the area over the long term would also assist in managing the drainage.

4.2 Stormwater and Water Use Policies

- 4.2.1 All future developments should be required to comply with the *B.C. Supplement to the Transportation Association of Canada Geometric Design Guide for Canadian Roads (2007)* (PDF, 25MB, 510 pages - June 29, 2007 (design guidelines). These design guidelines administered by the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MoTI) are intended to prevent increased flood risks and stream erosion downstream of any future development. <http://www.tac-atc.ca/en/publications-and-resources/geometric-design-guide-canadian-roads>
- 4.2.2 Where an on-site drainage report is required, the report should be prepared by a qualified professional to ensure the pre-development or natural hydrologic regime is maintained restored by the development in order to protect the functional values of stormwater management.
- 4.2.3 The water Balance Methodology should be used to control the rate and volume of future stormwater discharges as found here: <http://comox.waterbalance-express.ca/>
- 4.2.4 MoTI should be encouraged to enforce compliance of the design guidelines during approval of subdivisions and the issuance of any permits.
- 4.2.5 Enforcement of the design guidelines should be required as a condition of issuing a building permit.
- 4.2.6 The CVRD should undertake further analysis and monitoring of the drainage patterns in the Saratoga Miracle Beach area recognizing that future development, including subdivision and rezoning, may impact natural drainage patterns.
- 4.2.7 The CVRD should consider the creation of a Saratoga Miracle Beach tree cutting

Photo credit: Bruce Pirrie

- bylaw or a development permit area to ensure that any land alterations caused by tree removal are carried out in a way that maintains the natural drainage retention functions and properly manages on-site drainage management.
- 4.2.8 Where a biophysical assessment is required, the report should be prepared by a qualified professional in order to assess potential water quality and quantity impacts in order to protect the ecological values of the aquatic and riparian habitat.
- 4.2.9 The CVRD could assist in fostering partnerships with the Comox Valley Land Trust or other such agency to assist in providing for protection of the wetlands that are located on private lands.
- 4.2.10 The CVRD should continue to provide conservation incentives that lead to reductions in water use.



Part 5: Climate Change and Sustainability

5.1 Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Policies

Effective January 1, 2018 the provincial *Flood Hazard Area Land Use Management Guidelines*, (Section 3.5 and 3.6) were amended. (In this set of amendments, the Ministry of the Environment has established new standards for development in coastal areas that will effect flood construction levels and setbacks. In future, management of land in coastal flood hazard areas may require a flood hazard assessment to be completed by qualified Professional Engineers and Geoscientists with expertise in coastal engineering. As well, the new guidelines incorporate sea level rise projections, as included in the guidelines. Future development in the Saratoga Miracle Beach area will be required to comply with these

Photo credit: Bruce Pirrie

guidelines, found here:

https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/environment/air-land-water/water/integrated-flood-hazard-mgmt/final_amendment_to_s_35_and_36_fhalumg_17-10-01.pdf

Marine areas are dynamic environments as both wave action and human influences have the potential to significantly change the profile of the beach. The BC coast is expected to experience sea level rise with projections of approximately one metre over the next 100 years. Map 4 of this plan shows the one metre contour areas. This will occur as a result of both global events as well as local effects. Estimates of this sea level rise range between 80 -120 cm along the coastline, and this trend is expected to impact the Saratoga Miracle Beach coastline. Potential impacts could include more frequent and extreme high water levels, increased erosion and flooding, risk of damage to coastal infrastructure as well as increased maintenance and repair costs. Compounding this is the 200 year flood line, which as shown on Map 1, already significantly intrudes into the coastline and the existing properties along the shore.

Sea level rise could lead to property loss and damage due to erosion, loss of habitat, reduced biodiversity, saltwater intrusion into coastal aquifers, potential loss of cultural and historical sites and erosion of the highly valued beach and coast line in the Miracle Beach area in particular. More immediate is potential damage along the Saratoga Beach coast line from increasing winter storm surges, which are projected to increase flooding problems.

Precipitation patterns are also expected to change, generating more flood events and possibly leading to less water in the summer months. Adaptation strategies include protecting vegetative buffers along the river, protection of riparian areas and retention of wetlands to filter and slow the runoff will all assist in building the natural resiliency of the river. Water conservation measures are also important to practice and promote.

The following mitigation and adaptation strategies are policies recommended to best ensure the resiliency of the coastal and aquatic environments.

- 5.1.1 Enable the retreat of the current tourist commercial area by supporting expansion of this area further away from the coastal area. The area has been designated as mixed medium density residential / commercial to provide for the medium density development to retreat. Designating this area for future mixed density residential / commercial uses does not affect the current uses; rather, it provides for other mixed residential / commercial uses further back from the area subject to flooding and storm surges.
- 5.1.2 Encourage completion of a modelling exercise to monitor and accurately define subsequent changes to the 200 year flood lines. Establishing better modelling of sea level rise and flood line is a good first step in coastal shoreline projection to help to avoid losses and property damage. Modeling will also be useful in the establishment of new setbacks to encourage a managed retreat of new development away from the

Photo credit: Bruce Pirrie

shoreline areas.

- 5.1.3 Continue and expand conservation practices to reduce pressure on the aquifer and protect flows within the Oyster River including public education, water use restrictions, and infrastructure improvements that reduce water consumption.

5.2 Sustainability Policies

Providing for land use patterns that reduces the community's carbon footprint and nurtures a climate of sustainability is an important objective of a community plan.

- 5.2.1 Upon requests for rezoning, seek opportunities to provide for improved connectivity, such as enhanced cycling networks and pedestrian walkways, in accordance with the priorities set out in the transportation road network plan.
- 5.2.2 Continue to work with the community to provide incentives that achieve sustainability targets, such as reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, as set out in the Comox Valley Sustainability Strategy, the RGS and the Climate Action Plan.
- 5.2.3 Consider establishment of a Saratoga Miracle Beach sustainability service to accrue funds by way of tax requisitions, amenity contributions and grant funding to support recreation and sustainability initiatives.



Part 6: Housing

- 6.1 Continue to support and enable infill development including secondary suites,

Photo credit: Bruce Pirrie

carriage houses and secondary dwellings through zoning. This plan recommends that these provisions continue as measures to provide for affordable housing, aging in place and supportive living arrangements, and to support aspirations for the area to support moderate growth with higher density over time.

Part 7: Recreation, Parks and Trails Policies

Saratoga Miracle Beach residents wish to maintain and enhance the rural character, allowing residents to walk from one destination to another within the community. A number of parks and trails already exist, and several more have been proposed in the CVRD parks and greenways plan. As development opportunities emerge through rezoning of existing parcels, a more connected pedestrian network will be developed based on the following principles and priorities, which build upon the goals and objectives of the Rural Comox Valley Parks and Greenways Strategic Plan, 2011-2030:

- 7.1 Pursue development of additional pedestrian routes and trails to improve connectivity to the Miracle Beach Elementary School, transit connections, commercial/service centres, existing and future parks, and the waterfront; and better pedestrian and cycling infrastructure along Miracle Beach Drive and Clarkson Avenue.
- 7.2 Seek opportunities to improve parking and washroom facilities (additional comfort station) adjacent to Saratoga Miracle Beach for easier public access to beach areas.
- 7.3 Improve and open public beach access by continued progress towards objectives and priorities in the CVRD beach access study.
- 7.4 Support use of public facilities for cultural, social and recreational activities, and educational opportunities.

Part 8: Transportation Policies

8.1 Long-Term Road Network

A key goal of this land use plan is to provide for effective road networking to accommodate future growth. Saratoga Miracle Beach is identified as a settlement node in a “core settlement area,” on map 5 of the RGS. It is intended to support moderate growth in future, and as one of areas where 90 per cent of future growth is intended to occur. This plan intends to provide for that growth by directing where new and increased density should be encouraged, and how the transportation investments can support that growth in future.

The provision and maintenance of public roads in the CVRD falls within the jurisdiction of the Province, as carried out by the MoTI. The CVRD and the MoTI have in place an RGS implementation agreement to foster a collaborative planning process between the CVRD

Photo credit: Bruce Pirrie

and MoTI to better serve the residents of the Comox Valley, and while it is recognized that road improvements to existing roads are largely subject to the availability of provincial funding, the transportation policies contained in this local area plan are intended to guide that collaborative planning process for road improvements in the Saratoga Miracle Beach area.

To that end, this plan sets out a Road and Trail Network in Map 5 which delineates current roads and trails, along with proposed major collectors, local and arterial roads.

8.2 Roadway Cross Sections

The following policies advocate for more collaboration between the CVRD and MoTI to establish standards that may be more appropriate for the Saratoga Miracle Beach area.

The road network is comprised of arterial, collector, and local roads, with each road classification corresponds to the type of development it serves, traffic speeds and volumes (Table 1). Arterial roads generally provide residents with through traffic options, while local roads serve those residents living on adjacent properties. Collector roads are intended to connect the two.

Construction standards for roads in electoral areas are established in the *MoTI BC Supplement to the Transportation Association of Canada Manual*. This manual includes information on pavement width, shoulder width, slopes, and utility poles, and the standards included form the criteria used by MoTI for all roads.

Table 1. Roadway Cross Section Requirements⁵

	Local	Collector	Arterial		
Daily Volume	n/a	< 450 vph	< 200 vph	≤ 450 vph	> 450 vph
Design Speed	50-80km/h	50-80km/h	70-90km/h	70-90km/h	80-100km/h
Lane Width	3.6m	3.6m	3.6m	3.6m	3.6m
Total Vehicle Width	7.2m	7.2m	7.2m	7.2m	7.2m
Paved Shoulder	1.0/side	1.5m*/side	1.5m/side	2.0m/side	2.5m/side
Gravel Shoulder	0.5m/side	0.5m/side	0.5m/side	0.5m/side	0.5m/side

*Minimum 1.5m for shoulder bicycle way. Increase width to 2.0m when speeds 70km/h or greater and SADT greater than 5,000 vpd. Further increase to 2.5m for 80km/h and SADT greater than 10,000.

- 8.2.1 Encourage better connectivity within the community and from the area shown as the core area on Map 1. This includes better access to Miracle Beach Drive, Saratoga Road and Regent Road to ensure access is in place prior to approval of new multi lot subdivisions.
- 8.2.2 Encourage the Province to require the creation of a secondary access in any multi lot subdivisions including Saratoga Beach Estates in phase one and two.
- 8.2.3 Encourage the Province to work with the CVRD to repurpose Clarkson Avenue to better balance pedestrian and resident needs by limiting parking to one side of the road and constructing a bike path/pedestrian walkway within the Clarkson Avenue right of way on the other side by:
- Limiting parking to only one side of Clarkson Avenue,
 - Constructing pedestrian/cycling trail on one side of Clarkson Avenue,
 - Reducing speed limit by adding traffic calming devices and signs, and
 - Constructing additional and more organized public parking on Seaman Road,

⁵ BC Supplement to TAC Geometric Design Guide 2007 Editions, BC Ministry of Transportation, Chapter 400, Table 430.A and 430.B & Figures 440.A and 440.B. Available online: http://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/driving-and-transportation/transportation-infrastructure/engineering-standards-and-guidelines/highway-design-and-survey/tac/tac-2007-supplement/2007bc_supplement_to_tac.pdf

Eyre Road, Laval Road and the northeast bend of Clarkson Avenue.

- 8.2.4 Encourage MoTI to provide for public use of any unopened road right of ways for using that could include parking, comfort stations and public access and limit the issuance permits that impede public access.
- 8.2.5 Encourage MoTI to plan for and implement upgrades to Oyster River Way to make this road as a collector road as shown on Map 5 so that Oyster River Way can become a thoroughfare to Miracle Beach Drive and out to Highway 19A. This includes encouraging the Province to require any new development in the area, including subdivisions, to contribute towards the creation of Oyster River Way and Miracle Beach Drive as a collector road as a key component of the future transportation network for Saratoga Miracle Beach as a settlement node. This should extend south of McLarey Avenue and east of Highway 19A, including a transportation intersection at the junction of Miracle Beach Drive and Highway 19A.
- 8.2.6 Encourage MoTI to conduct a further traffic analysis of the area, in light of the growth projections of the local area plan, the OCP and the RGS to determine suitable new networks.
- 8.2.7 Require transportation impact studies for all multi-lot residential and commercial subdivisions.
- 8.2.8 Encourage developers of large-scale development to construct pedestrian, bicycle and transit improvement, as identified in this local area plan.
- 8.2.9 Encourage MoTI to allow, by way of permits, an iconic community gateway signage within the Highway 19A right of way at Saratoga Beach Road and Miracle Beach Drive as gateway markers and to profile the entrances to the community.
- 8.2.10 Encourage MoTI to upgrade the Oyster River Bridge at Regent Road in accordance with section 23(3) of the OCP, or replace bridge to accommodate two-way vehicle traffic, increase load limit to accommodate buses, and include a dedicated multi-use facility to accommodate walking and cycling.
- 8.2.11 Encourage the Province to avoid cul-de-sacs in the approval of multi-lot subdivisions to encourage active living, community walkability and trail connectivity.
- 8.2.12 Support any “safe routes to schools” projects for areas surrounding Miracle Beach Elementary School by working with school district and parent advisory committee.
- 8.2.13 Encourage MoTI to reduce speed limits on priority roads in the Miracle Beach service centre. Additionally, obtain a speed reader board and install it in locations with high incidence of speeding, entrances to the community and school zones.

8.3 Active Transportation

Reducing congestion on the roads, and providing multiple transportation options will help to maintain and improve quality of life in the Saratoga Miracle Beach area. In partnership with SRD, BC Transit and MoTI, the CVRD will pursue opportunities to improve the Oyster River bus exchange. The following policies apply:

- 8.3.1 Support growth of the two existing area service centres, including one at the current Oyster River commercial centre across the Oyster River (Discovery Foods) and a second one close to Miracle Beach Drive and Old Island Highway (mini golf and racetrack facilities). These centres will serve as central transportation centres where a range of services can be provided including transit stops, park and ride facilities, bike storage, electric vehicles and ride share and/or car stop stations.
- 8.3.2 Seek opportunities for grant funding, in cooperation with MoTI, to provide for improved pedestrian and cycling infrastructure throughout the area (Map 6). The short term focus is area east of the Old Island Highway and the long term focus is area west of the Old Island Highway. This will reduce greenhouse gas emissions, provide residents and tourists with improved transportation opportunities and encourage healthy living.
- 8.3.3 Section 5.1 of the *CVRD Transportation Road Network Plan, 2014* identifies specific roads within the Saratoga Miracle Beach community as priority roadside greenway routes. Roadside greenways are multi-use routes contained within a maintained road right-of-way either with a separated pathway or widened road shoulders. Table 2 is a list of relevant priority roadside greenway routes.

Table 2 Priority Roadside Greenway Routes

Route	Length	Description
Highway 19A (Merville-Oyster River)	13.1km	Develop greenway on Highway 19A between Coleman Road (Merville) and Oyster River bridge, improve roadside conditions and/or consider roadside trail
Macaulay Road	9.8km	Develop greenway on Macaulay Road between Highway 19A and Macaulay Heights Park; potential to expand to include Doyle Road (additional 2.5km), which is beyond the local area plan area.
Miracle Beach Drive	2.2km	Develop greenway on Miracle Beach Drive between Highway 19A and Clarkson Avenue
Oakes Road/Catherwood Road/Regent Road	2.1km	Develop greenway on Oakes Road, Catherwood Road and Regent Road between Tammy Road and Oyster River Bridge (Regent Road)

8.4 Transit Services

The CVRD is committed to implement the BC Transit future plan that seeks to maintain and enhance public transit services between Saratoga Miracle Beach and Courtenay/Comox. Currently, the No. 12 route, North Valley Connector, does five trips to Oyster River each weekday from downtown Courtenay, and two on Saturdays. Full schedule information is available at on the BC Transit's website at bctransit.com.

Residents have indicated an interest in seeing more frequent and more direct transit service to their community. The CVRD, in its 2011 RGS and the 2008 Comox Valley Sustainability Strategy supports more and improved public transit to reduce greenhouse gases and to reduce the level of single occupant vehicles on the highway.

The 2014 Comox Valley Transit Future Plan identifies a number of short, medium and long termed priorities for the Saratoga Miracle Beach area. These include:

Short – term (0-5 years):

- Improved frequency and structure of the No. 12 North Valley Connector

Medium – term (6-10 years):

- Consider expansion of community bus services to areas with sufficient density and efficient road design.
- Improve directness of route No. 12 North Valley Connector and consider additional evening and weekend service.

Photo credit: Bruce Pirrie

- Infrastructure improvements to improve the Oyster River minor exchange, and examine the feasibility of constructing a park and ride station in the Saratoga Miracle Beach area including co-locating this facility at the existing commercial area north of the Oyster River.

Medium to Long – term (6-25 years):

- Expand Handy Dart service to the Saratoga Miracle Beach settlement node.

The Saratoga Miracle Beach transit hub is located in the commercial area north of Oyster River. A number of positive features, as noted in the 2014 BC Transit Future Plan, support improvements, over time, to transit services in the area. This includes the existing commercial facilities north of the Oyster River that can serve as a transit hub, including an existing bus stop/shelter that currently connects the Comox Valley transit system to the Campbell River transit system. The site offers a lit bus shelter and abundant parking in the privately owned shopping complex. In future, an assessment of parking lot capacity in the commercial area north of the Oyster River during the peak summer season would assist in planning for future transit expansion. There may be a potential for an area north of Glenmore Road to be developed into a park and ride. This area is ideal as it is located less than three kilometres, cycling distance from the Saratoga Miracle Beach resort and residential areas. It is one of two existing service centres in the area, that while, outside of the settlement node and core development area, will likely continue to serve as a commercial centre for the area.

There are some challenges with this, as the area is located outside of the Saratoga Miracle Beach settlement node, and outside of the CVRD. As well, there is a slightly complicated road access to and from the bus stop due to turning restrictions on and off Old Island Highway. While improvements to the Regent Road bridge to address load limit restrictions, and thereby improve access to the bus stop is not a current MoTI priority, the CVRD will continue to advise MoTI of this capital improvement as a community priority.

Similarly, in the Miracle Beach area, a different set of site attributes can be considered in options to improve transit service to the area. This includes existing commercial facilities such as a post office, mini-golf, ice-cream parlor, professional offices and the Saratoga Speedway. A streetlight currently exists at the corner of Old Island Highway and Miracle Beach Drive, and there is the potential for park and ride in the area. There appears to be an abundance of existing parking, though privately owned.

The second service centre is located in the area west of Old Island Highway at Miracle Beach Drive. With fewer residences within reasonable cycling and walking distance, and there is not as much year round commercial activity as currently exists in the northern service centre near the Oyster River; however, over time, this area is expected to generate employment activities and as such could function as a transit hub.

Photo credit: Bruce Pirrie

Part of the supporting infrastructure for the transit services are bus stops. The *Comox Valley Transportation Road Network Plan, 2014*, recommends that the transit system be moving from a “flag” based system to a bus stop based system. In a “flag” based system, loading passengers must wave to an approaching bus to indicate they would like to board and disembarking passengers must communicate directly to the driver to describe where they wish to alight. While the flagging system offers flexibility, it is potentially unsafe and result in uncertainty for new passengers. There are currently two bus stops in the community. To fund future bus stops, a regional district program should be created as follows:

- a. Establish an annual capital and maintenance budget,
- b. Develop a development cost charge bylaw,
- c. Develop a service area in the electoral areas to fund transit and active transportation facilities, and
- d. Pursue external grant opportunities.

Additionally, Section 6.3.1 of the *Comox Valley Transportation Road Network Plan, 2014*, suggests a shuttle service to respond to the higher summer demands of Saratoga and Miracle Beach.



Part 9: Community Amenities Policy Priorities

The purpose of this local area plan is to identify the desired future use of land. The next step is then to rezone the land, and when a local government rezones land, it usually increases the land’s value and provides a financial benefit to the applicant, usually the owner. Local governments generally try to obtain a share of that financial benefit in order to help fund new infrastructure or to provide for other public benefit to the community that will host what could be a new, higher use or new density level.

Photo credit: Bruce Pirrie

While BC legislation allows local governments to require the owners or developers to provide infrastructure, such as roads, parks, water, drainage and sewer facilities, not all impacts of development are fully covered by the legislation and so local governments frequently seek to negotiate community amenities as a way give back to the community that will absorb the results of the rezoning. This could be parks, community signage, recreation facilities or fire halls, that is commiserate with the type and scale of rezoning. Local governments do not have the authority to require applicants for rezoning to pay community amenity contributions, rather they are negotiated.

The following items reflect community priorities to be considered as community amenities in accordance with the OCP prior to any rezoning.

9.1 Community Amenity Priorities

- 9.1.1 Improved road and transit access within the settlement node in accordance with the road network plan included in this local area plan.
- 9.1.2 Improved trails, greenways to promote connectivity and walkability throughout the settlement node.
- 9.1.3 Design, construction and implementation of iconic neighborhood signs to mark the entry points to the community at both north and south end points on Highway 19A.
- 9.1.4 Water capacity measures that identify alternative sources and conservations incentive based measures to preserve and protect the existing supply.
- 9.1.5 Public washroom facilities in close proximity to the beach.
- 9.1.6 Public parking in proximity to the beach.
- 9.1.7 Multi-level care supports to meet social and recreational needs related to aging in place.
- 9.1.8 Improved transportation corridors with separated pedestrian and cycling opportunities.

Part 10: Employment and Economic Growth Policies

Saratoga Miracle Beach continues to be an important tourist and recreational destination offering important and attractive regional assets such as the Miracle Beach Provincial Park just south of the planning area, a range of highly popular beaches, the Oyster River, Saratoga Speedway, mini-golf, go-carts and a range of older style beachfront cottage rentals.

A good range of commercial services are available north of the Oyster River which provides for local community shopping including groceries, liquor, video, veterinarian and a gift shop.

Photo credit: Bruce Pirrie

Localized medical services are assets the community would welcome and small scale additional commercial uses are encouraged such as medical and other professional offices, child care, and other services in areas shown on Map 1.

There are currently 14 lots designated tourist commercial along the Saratoga Beach waterfront. The development and level of investment in this area is likely to increase at such time as there is full sewer services. The plan recognizes that the commercial area located north of the Oyster River will continue to serve as a key service centre for Saratoga Miracle Beach, given its established commercial area and the presence of the transit exchange.

10.1 Economic Development Policies

- 10.1.1 Support year round operations of tourist commercial in conjunction with adequate servicing.
- 10.1.2 Do not support rezoning of existing tourist commercial properties to residential uses.
- 10.1.3 Collect more precise data base regarding tourist needs, user satisfaction surveys, numbers, and activities and in the Saratoga Miracle Beach area, including the Miracle Beach Provincial Park, tourist satisfaction, service needs, etc. in order to inform future investment decisions that in turn, could support the interests of the community by way of amenities. This data could be collected by the CVRD through its service provider, the Comox Valley Economic Development Society, or another agency.
- 10.1.4 Support home based businesses that balance employment opportunities with the rural character of the neighborhood, in compliance with the Comox Valley zoning bylaw requirements.
- 10.1.5 Facilitate the development of Saratoga Beach Estates, and associated sewer treatment plan facilities, in accordance with the current or a revised master development agreement.

Part 11: Future Local Area Plan Review

Several on-going initiatives were completed to support and inform future development of Saratoga Miracle Beach. This includes a hydrological assessment of the work to identify future water supplies to the Black Creek Oyster River water service, a groundwater study to determine the rate of failing septic fields and an assessment of the Saratoga wetlands to understand and preserve the drainage functions of that feature.

- 11.1.1 Review the Saratoga Miracle Beach local area plan within five to seven years in order to accommodate any new findings of initiatives currently underway, and given the importance of these initiatives to the long term growth, health and social well-being

Photo credit: Bruce Pirrie

of the community.



Part 12: Summary of Local Area Plan Recommendations

3.1 Land Use Designations

- 3.1.1 Core Development Area: this is the town centre of the settlement node.
- 3.1.2 Residential: this includes small lot neighbourhoods with primarily single family residences with provisions for secondary dwellings and secondary suites.
- 3.1.3 Mixed Medium Density Residential / Commercial: this area is designated to provide for the expansion of beach resort tourist commercial development, and medium mixed residential and commercial development over the long term.
- 3.1.4 Country Residential: this includes large rural lots relying on private wells and septic systems.
- 3.1.5 Rural Residential: there are two areas with this designation: one area located south of the Oyster River, east of Old Island Highway and north of Regent Road, and a second in the Black Creek drainage area in the south eastern portion of the area plan boundaries.
- 3.1.6 Tourist Commercial: this category provides for coastal tourism activities including medium density tourist accommodations and related commercial activities including recreational facilities and accessory uses.

Photo credit: Bruce Pirrie

- 3.1.7 Employment Lands: this designation provides for a range of expanded highway commercial and light industrial uses along Old Island Highway and in select areas within the settlement node, as shown on Map 1.
- 3.1.8 Service Centres: two areas have been designated as service areas as shown on Map 1.
- 3.1.9 200 Year Floodplain Area: this area denotes the area that is likely to experience flooding at least once in every 200 years, and is based on the 1984, 200 year flood line data. New development or expansion of existing development within this area is subject to the floodplain bylaw and the provincial *Flood Hazard Area Land Use Management Guidelines Amendment*, January 1, 2018, to incorporate sea level rise.

3.2 Land Use Policies

- 3.2.1 Until community sewer is available, new lots created by subdivision must meet Vancouver Island Health Authority's subdivision standards. The intent is to prolong the expected life of sewerage systems and safeguard the environment and public health. This policy reflects the findings of the *February 2016 Report on the 2015 Saratoga Beach Groundwater Monitoring Program*.
- 3.2.2 Higher density mixed residential development in the area west of the Old Island Highway, designated as country residential is not recommended until the core development area has been sufficiently developed. Development in the core area first will support required thresholds to cover costs associated sewage services to this area.
- 3.2.3 The local area plan boundaries should be reviewed to consider inclusion of the Seaview Road area at such time as the RGS is under review. In accordance with MG 1B-4 of the RGS, amendments to the local area plan boundary would be considered a minor amendment to the RGS.
- 3.2.4 Coordinate and host a design charrette for the newly designated medium density mixed residential commercial area that provides for residents to participate in the redesign of the area and to complete detailed plans for redevelopment of this area.
- 3.2.5 Encourage that the construction of any new roads built within the settlement node are transit friendly, meeting standards which enable transit use. Road layouts should offer connections to and integrate with current community fabric. As the Old Island Highway provides a gateway to the community, aesthetically pleasing commercial uses should front onto this highway corridor.

4.2 Storm Water and Water Use Policies

- 4.2.1 All future developments should be required to comply with the *B.C. Supplement to the Transportation Association of Canada Geometric Design Guide for Canadian Roads (2007)* (PDF, 25MB, 510 pages - June 29, 2007 (design guidelines). These design guidelines administered by the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MoTI) are

Photo credit: Bruce Pirrie

- intended to prevent increased flood risks and stream erosion downstream of any future development. <http://www.tac-atc.ca/en/publications-and-resources/geometric-design-guide-canadian-roads>
- 4.2.2 Where an on-site drainage report is required, the report should be prepared by a qualified professional to ensure the pre-development or natural hydrologic regime is maintained restored by the development in order to protect the functional values of stormwater management.
- 4.2.3 The water Balance Methodology should be used to control the rate and volume of future stormwater discharges as found here: <http://comox.waterbalance-express.ca/>
- 4.2.4 MoTI should be encouraged to enforce compliance of the design guidelines during approval of subdivisions and the issuance of any permits.
- 4.2.5 Enforcement of the design guidelines should be required as a condition of issuing a building permit.
- 4.2.6 The CVRD should undertake further analysis and monitoring of the drainage patterns in the Saratoga Miracle Beach area recognizing that future development, including subdivision and rezoning, may impact natural drainage patterns.
- 4.2.7 The CVRD should consider the creation of a Saratoga Miracle Beach tree cutting bylaw or a development permit area to ensure that any land alterations caused by tree removal are carried out in a way that maintains the natural drainage retention functions and properly manages on-site drainage management.
- 4.2.8 Where a biophysical assessment is required, the report should be prepared by a qualified professional to assess potential water quality and quantity impacts in order to protect the ecological values of the aquatic and riparian habitat.
- 4.2.9 The CVRD could assist in fostering partnerships with the Comox Valley Land Trust or other such agency to assist in providing for protection of the wetlands that are located on private lands.
- 4.2.10 The CVRD should continue to provide conservation incentives that lead to reductions in water use

5.0 Climate Change and Sustainability Policies

- 5.1.1 Enable the retreat of the current tourist commercial area by supporting expansion of this area further away from the coastal area. The area has been designated as mixed medium density residential / commercial to provide for the medium density development to retreat. Designating this area for future mixed density residential / commercial uses does not affect the current uses; rather, it provides for other mixed

Photo credit: Bruce Pirrie

- residential /commercial uses further back from the area subject to flooding and storm surges.
- 5.1.2 Encourage completion of a modelling exercise to monitor and accurately define subsequent changes to the 200 year flood lines. Establishing better modelling of sea level rise and flood line is a good first step in coastal shoreline projection to help to avoid losses and property damage. Modeling will also be useful in the establishment of new setbacks to encourage a managed retreat of new development away from the shoreline areas.
- 5.1.3 Continue and expand conservation practices to reduce pressure on the aquifer and protect flows within the Oyster River including public education, water use restrictions, and infrastructure improvements that reduce water consumption.
- 5.2.1 Upon requests for rezoning, seek opportunities to provide for improved connectivity, such as enhanced cycling networks and pedestrian walkways, in accordance with the priorities set out in the transportation road network plan.
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- 5.2.3 Consider establishment of a Saratoga Miracle Beach sustainability service to accrue funds by way of tax requisitions, amenity contributions and grant funding to support recreation and sustainability initiatives.

6.0 Housing Policies

- 6.1 Continue to support and enable infill development including secondary suites, carriage houses and secondary dwellings through zoning. This plan recommends that these provisions continue as measures to provide for affordable housing, aging in place and supportive living arrangements, and to support aspirations for the area to support moderate growth with higher density over time.

7.0 Parks and Trails Policies

- 7.1 Pursue development of additional pedestrian routes and trails to improve connectivity to the Miracle Beach Elementary School, transit connections, commercial/service centres, existing and future parks, and the waterfront; and better pedestrian and cycling infrastructure along Miracle Beach Drive and Clarkson Avenue.
- 7.2 Seek opportunities to improve parking and washroom facilities (additional comfort station) adjacent to Saratoga Miracle Beach for easier public access to beach areas.

- 7.3 Improve and open public beach access by continued progress towards objectives and priorities in the CVRD beach access study.
- 7.4 Support use of public facilities for cultural, social and recreational activities, and educational opportunities.

8.0 Transportation Polices

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- 8.2.2 Encourage the Province to require the creation of a secondary access in any multi lot subdivisions including Saratoga Beach Estates in phase one and two.
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- a. Limiting parking to only one side of Clarkson Avenue,
 - b. Constructing pedestrian/cycling trail on one side of Clarkson Avenue,
 - c. Reducing speed limit by adding traffic calming devices and signs, and
 - d. Constructing additional and more organized public parking on Seaman Road, Eyre Road, Laval Road and the northeast bend of Clarkson Avenue.
- 8.2.4 Encourage MoTI to provide for public use of any unopened road right of ways for using that could include parking, comfort stations and public access and limit the issuance permits that impede public access.
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- 8.2.12 Support any “safe routes to schools” projects for areas surrounding Miracle Beach Elementary School by working with school district and parent advisory committee.
- 8.2.13 Encourage MoTI to reduce speed limits on priority roads in the Miracle Beach service centre. Additionally, obtain a speed reader board and install it in locations with high incidence of speeding, entrances to the community and school zones.
- 8.3.1 Support growth of the two existing area service centres, including one at the current Oyster River commercial centre across the Oyster River (Discovery Foods) and a second one close to Miracle Beach Drive and Old Island Highway (mini golf and racetrack facilities). These centres will serve as central transportation centres where a range of services can be provided including transit stops, park and ride facilities, bike storage, electric vehicles and ride share and/or car stop stations.
- 8.3.2 Seek opportunities for grant funding, in cooperation with MoTI, to provide for improved pedestrian and cycling infrastructure throughout the area (Map 6). The short term focus is area east of the Old Island Highway and the long term focus is area west of the Old Island Highway. This will reduce greenhouse gas emissions, provide residents and tourists with improved transportation opportunities and encourage healthy living.
- 8.3.3 Section 5.1 of the *CVRD Transportation Road Network Plan, 2014* identifies specific roads within the Saratoga Miracle Beach community as priority roadside greenway routes. Roadside greenways are multi-use routes contained within a maintained road right-of-way either with a separated pathway or widened road shoulders. Table 2 is a list of relevant priority roadside greenway routes.

9.0 Community Amenity Policies

- 9.1.1 Improved road and transit access within the settlement node in accordance with the road network plan included in this local area plan.
- 9.1.2 Improved trails, greenways to promote connectivity and walkability throughout the settlement node.
- 9.1.3 Design, construction and implementation of iconic neighborhood signs to mark the entry points to the community at both north and south end points on Highway 19A.
- 9.1.4 Water capacity measures that identify alternative sources and conservations incentive based measures to preserve and protect the existing supply.
- 9.1.5 Public washroom facilities in close proximity to the beach.
- 9.1.6 Public parking in proximity to the beach.
- 9.1.7 Multi-level care supports to meet social and recreational needs related to aging in place.
- 9.1.8 Improved transportation corridors with separated pedestrian and cycling opportunities.

10. Economic Development Policies

- 10.1.1 Support year round operations of tourist commercial in conjunction with adequate servicing.
- 10.1.2 Do not support rezoning of existing tourist commercial properties to residential uses.
- 10.1.3 Collect more precise data base regarding tourist needs, user satisfaction surveys, numbers, and activities and in the Saratoga Miracle Beach area, including the Miracle Beach Provincial Park, tourist satisfaction, service needs, etc. in order to inform future investment decisions that in turn, could support the interests of the community by way of amenities. This data could be collected by the CVRD through its service provider, the Comox Valley Economic Development Society, or another agency.
- 10.1.4 Support home based businesses that balance employment opportunities with the rural character of the neighborhood, in compliance with the Comox Valley zoning bylaw requirements.
- 10.1.5 Facilitate the development of Saratoga Beach Estates, and associated sewer treatment plan facilities, in accordance with the current or a revised master development

Photo credit: Bruce Pirrie

agreement.

11. Future Local Area Plan Review

11.1.1 Review the Saratoga Miracle Beach local area plan within five to seven years in order to accommodate any new findings of initiatives currently underway, and given the importance of these initiatives to the long term growth, health and social well-being of the community.

Draft

Map 1: Future Land Use Designations

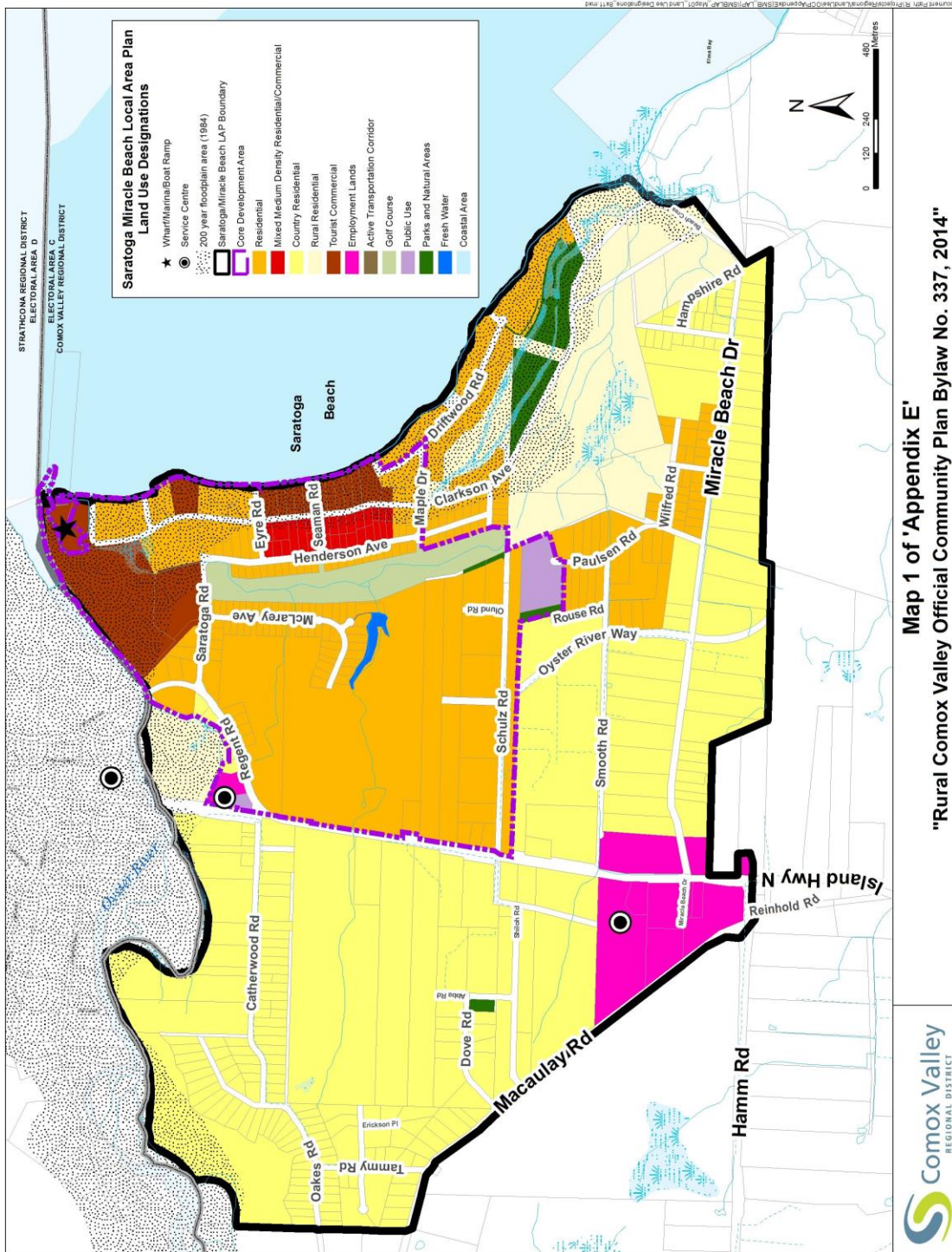


Photo credit: Bruce Pirrie

Map 2: Sensitive Ecosystem Inventory Map

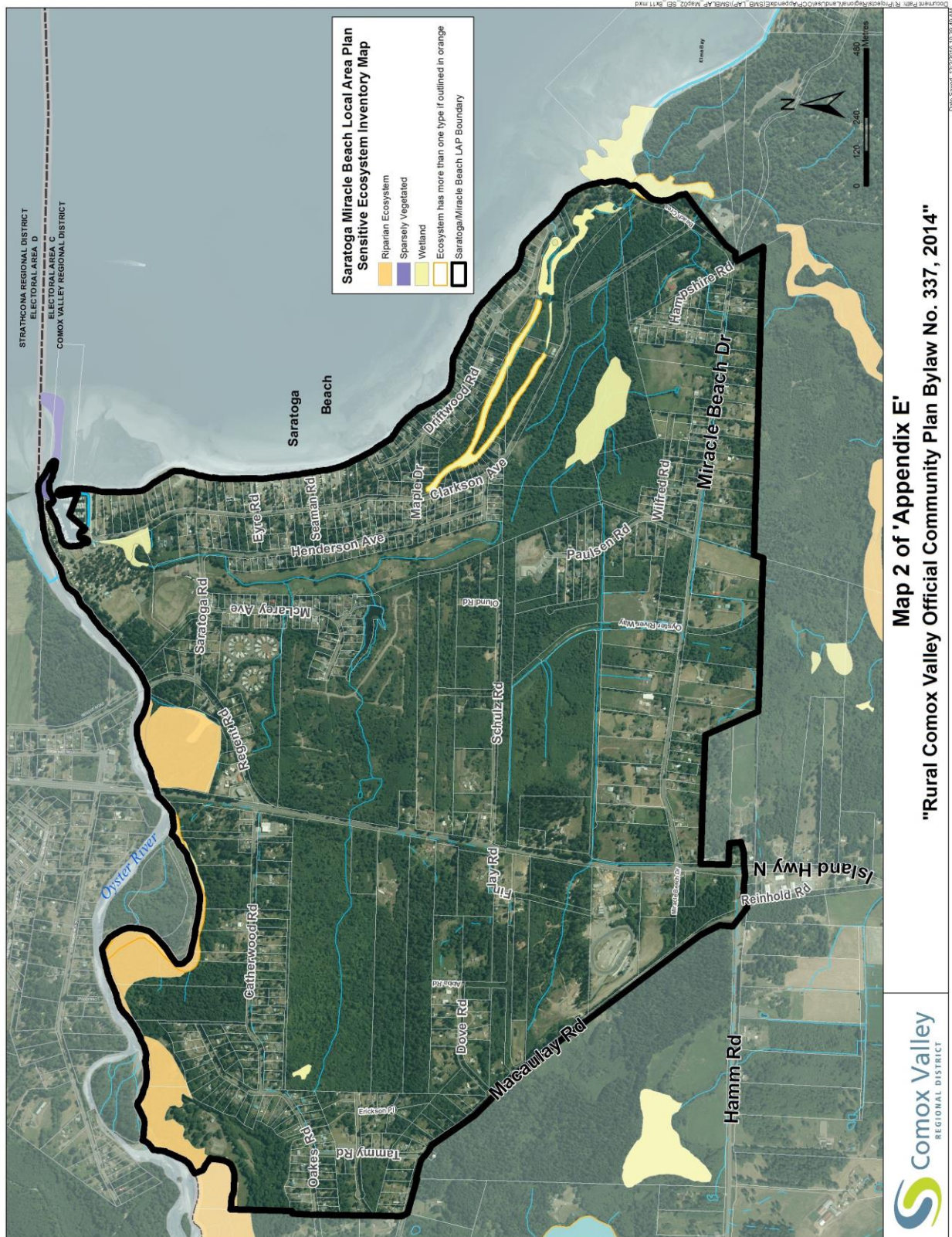


Photo credit: Bruce Pirrie

Map 3: Saratoga Beach Estates Master Development Agreement



Photo credit: Bruce Pirrie

Map 4: 1 Metre Contour Map - Projected Sea Level Rise

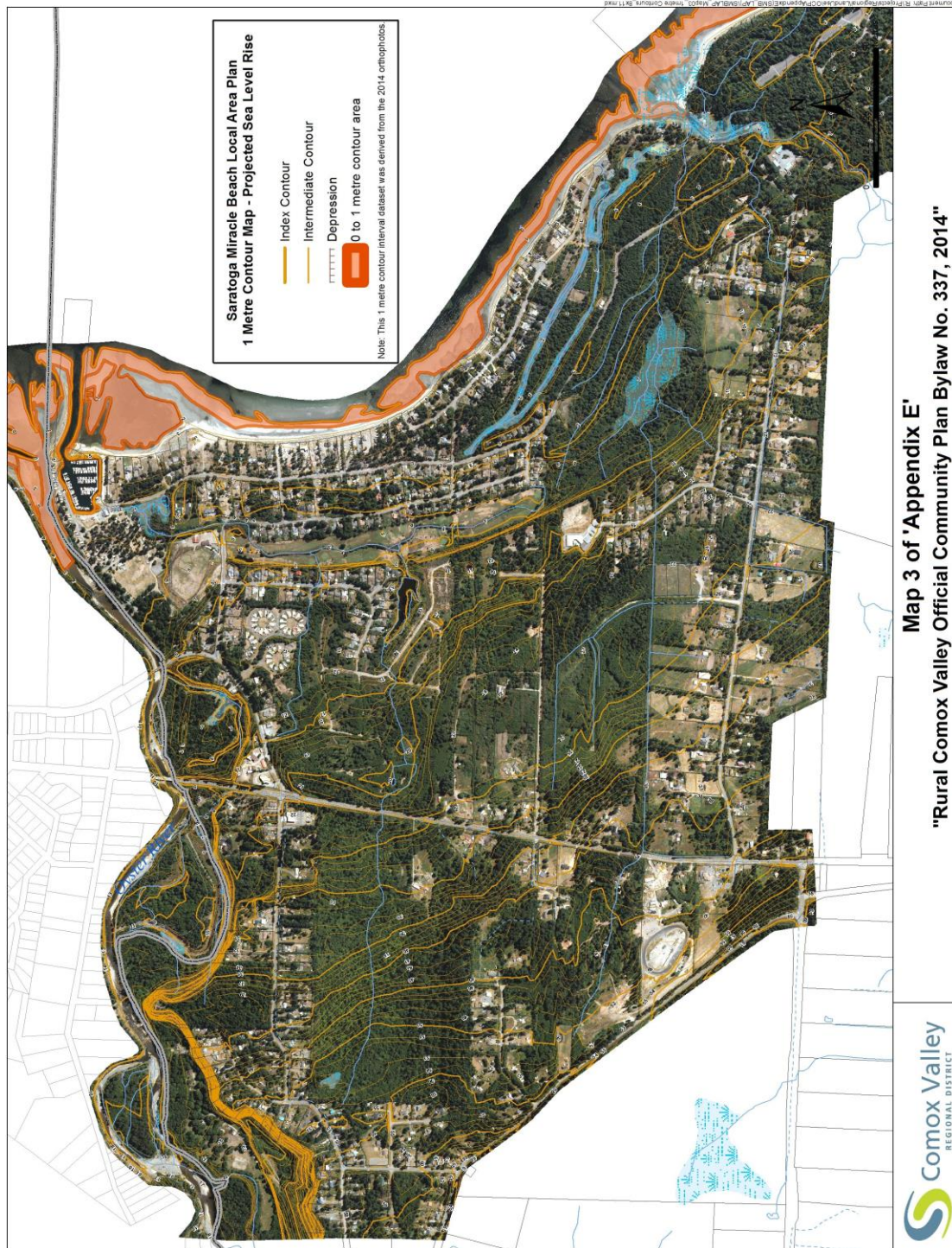


Photo credit: Bruce Pirrie

Map 5: Transportation Road Network Plan

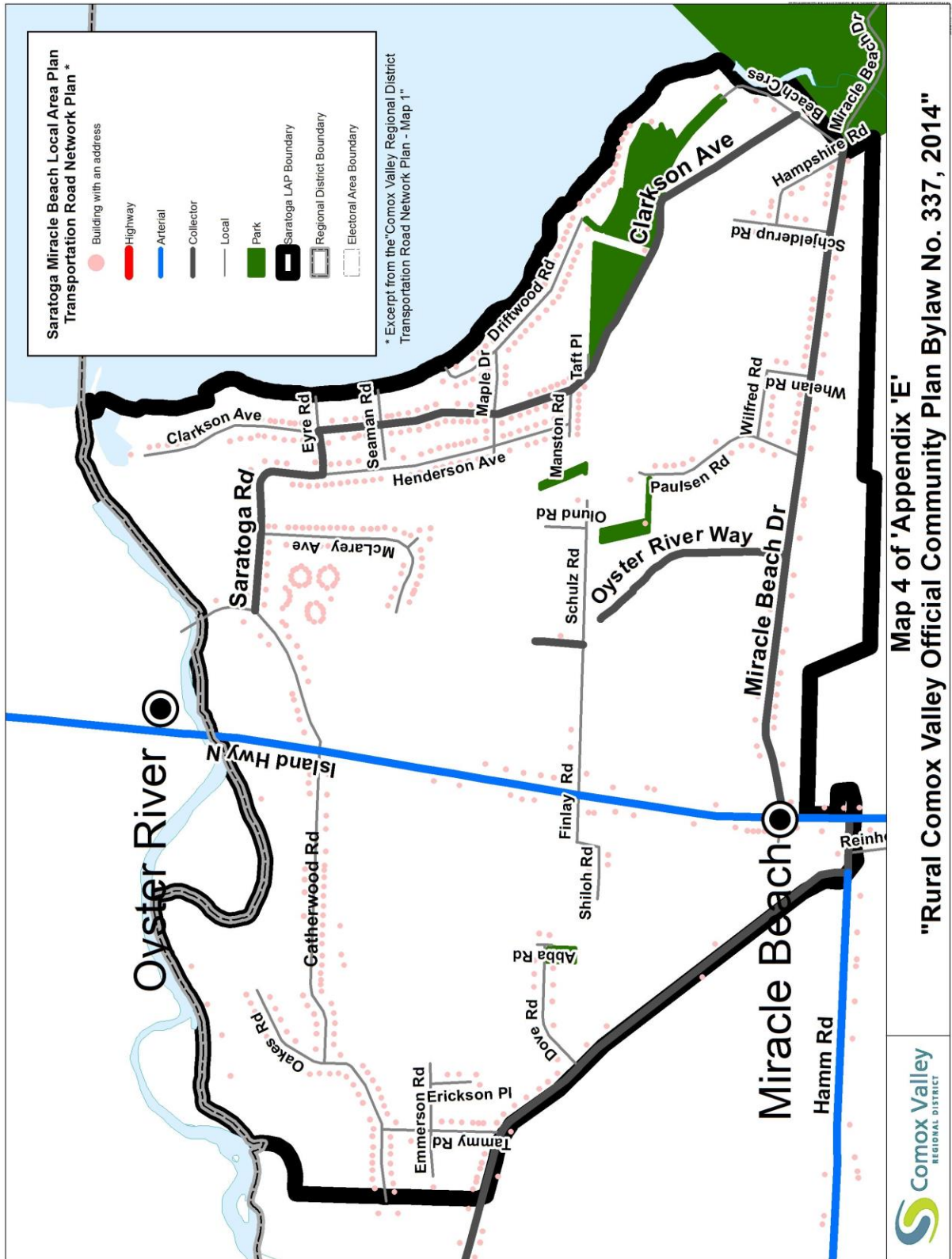


Photo credit: Bruce Pirrie

Map 6: Active Transportation Concept Plan

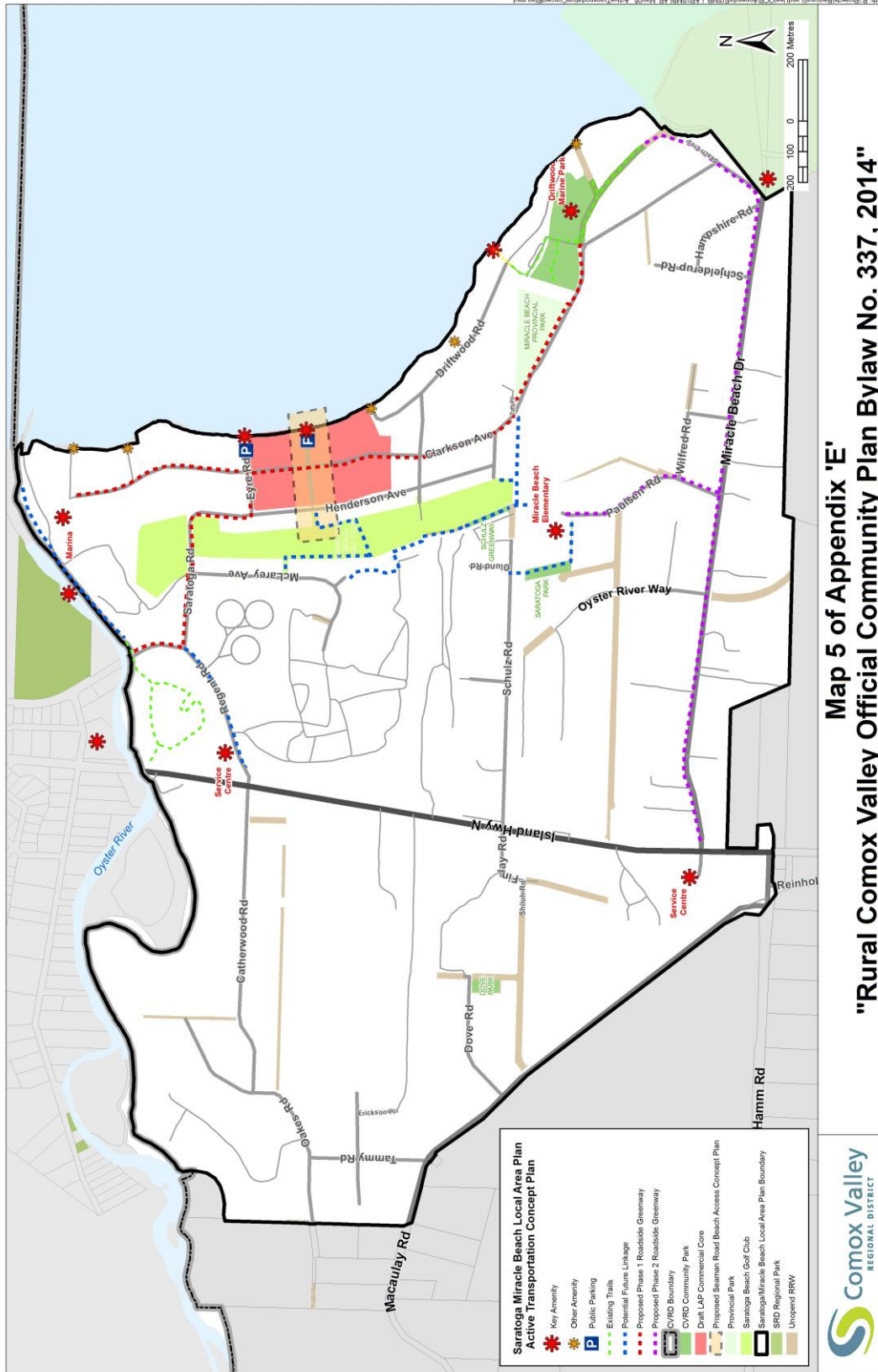


Photo credit: Bruce Pirrie

Agency and First Nations Referral List

- The following agencies will receive a referral of the draft Saratoga Miracle Beach Local Area Plan.

First Nations

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	K'ómoks First Nation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Homalco (Xwemalhkwu) Indian Band
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	We Wai Kai Nation of the Laich-Kwil-Tach Treaty Society	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Wei Wai Kum First Nation / Kwiakah First Nation Kwiakah Treaty Society

Provincial Ministries and Agencies

	Agricultural Land Commission		Ministry of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources
	BC Assessment Authority		Ministry of Environment & Climate Change Strategy
	BC Parks		Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development
	BC Ferry Services Inc.		Ministry of Indigenous Relations & Reconciliation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	BC Transit		Ministry of Municipal Affairs & Housing
	Ministry of Agriculture		Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, and Emergency B.C.
	Ministry of Community, Sport and Cultural Development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure
	Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations		

Local Government

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Comox (Town of)		Regional District of Nanaimo
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Courtenay (City of)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Strathcona Regional District
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Cumberland (Village of)		Islands Trust

CVRD Branches

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Corporate Financial Officer (Required for an OCP amendment)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	General Manager of Engineering Services Branch (Required for an OCP amendment)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Comox Valley Emergency Program Coordinator	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Manager of Transit and Sustainability
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Manager of Fire Services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Senior Manager of Water/Wastewater Services
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Manager of Parks		

Other

	Agricultural Advisory Planning Commission	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Vancouver Island Health Authority (Environmental Health)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	School District #71 (Comox Valley)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Puntledge – Black Creek Area C Advisory Planning Commission
	School District #72 (Campbell River)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Saratoga and Miracle Beach Residents' Association (SAMBRA)