

THE DISTRICT OF SAANICH

Economic Development **Strategy**



January 15, 2024



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Territorial acknowledgment

We acknowledge that the District of Saanich lies within the territories of the **lək'wəŋən** peoples represented by the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations and the **W̱ SÁNEĆ** peoples represented by the **W̱ JOŁEŁP** (Tsartlip), **BOŲÉĆEN** (Pauquachin), **STÁUTW̱** (Tsayout), **W̱ SIKEM** (Tseycum) and **MÁLEXEŁ** (Malahat) Nations.

Participation acknowledgment

We would like to thank District mayor and councillors, businesses, residents, stakeholders and organizations that participated by providing input through our surveys, focus groups, workshops, open house and interview program. We gratefully acknowledge your time and insights. We would also like to thank District staff who contributed directly and indirectly to the completion of this plan.

Diversity statement

We are committed to celebrating the rich diversity of people in our community. We are guided by the principle that embracing diversity enriches the lives of all people. We all share the responsibility for creating an equitable and inclusive community and for addressing discrimination in all forms.



Abbreviations

ACCE	Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives
AI	Artificial Intelligence
ALR	Agriculture Land Reserve
BIA	Business Improvement Area
BRE	Business Retention and Expansion
CDP	Carbon Disclosure Project
COAST	Centre for Ocean Applied Sustainable Technologies
CRD	Capital Regional District
CRFAIR	Capital Region Food and Agriculture Initiatives Roundtable
DGV	Destination Greater Victoria
DOS	District of Saanich
EDAC	Economic Development Advisory Committee
ESG	Environmental, Social, Governance
FCM	Federation of Canadian Municipalities
FMC	Fifteen Minute City
FP	Financial Post
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GHG	Green House Gas

GOBC	Government of British Columbia
GVSTC	Greater Victoria Sport Tourism Commission
ICF	Intelligent City Forum
IESVic	University of Victoria Institute for Integrated Energy Systems
IEDC	International Economic Development Council
IoT	Internet of Things
IPC	Indigenous Prosperity Centre
NGO	Non-government Organization
OCP	Official Community Plan
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
SIPP	South Island Prosperity Partnership
UBC	University of British Columbia
UVIC	University of Victoria
VIATEC	Victoria Innovation, Advanced Technology and Entrepreneurship Council
VILS	Vancouver Island Life Sciences Association
VITP	Vancouver Island Technology Park



1. Executive summary

1.1 Background

Saanich is undertaking an economic development strategy (the “Strategy”) to guide its newly established Economic Development Office. The District requires a vision for the local economy, specific implementable actions to achieve economic resiliency post COVID-19 and a path forward to sustain and grow a diverse and prosperous economy. The delivery of this report is an important step in bringing together people, place and business into a cohesive, coherent pathway for a prosperous economic future. It strives to leverage Saanich’s strategic location and physical assets, vibrant business community, existing economic base, strong institutional capacity and talented workforce to achieve sustainable prosperity.

1.2 Rationale



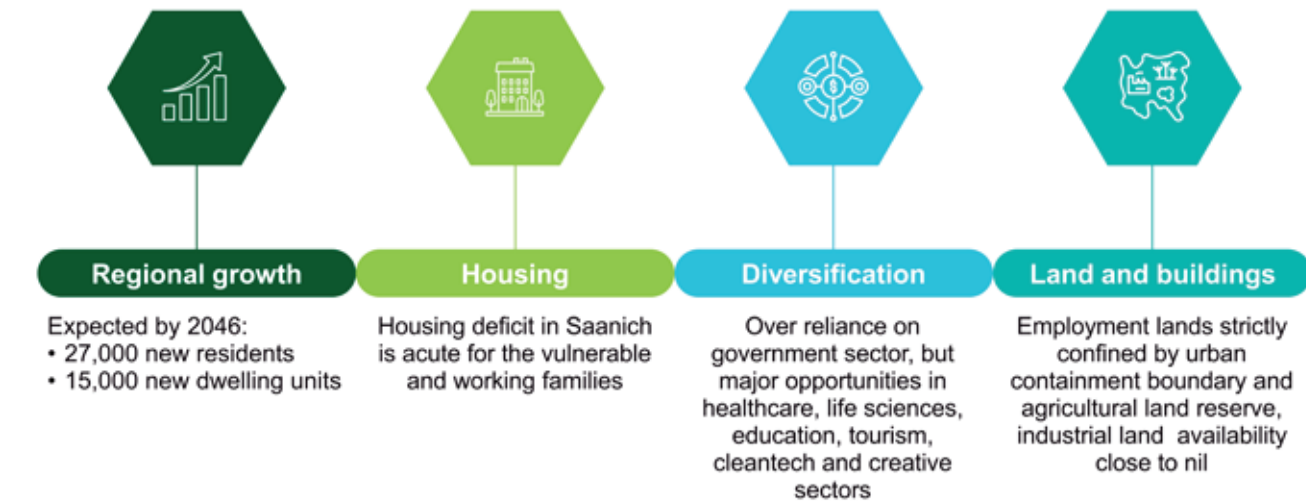
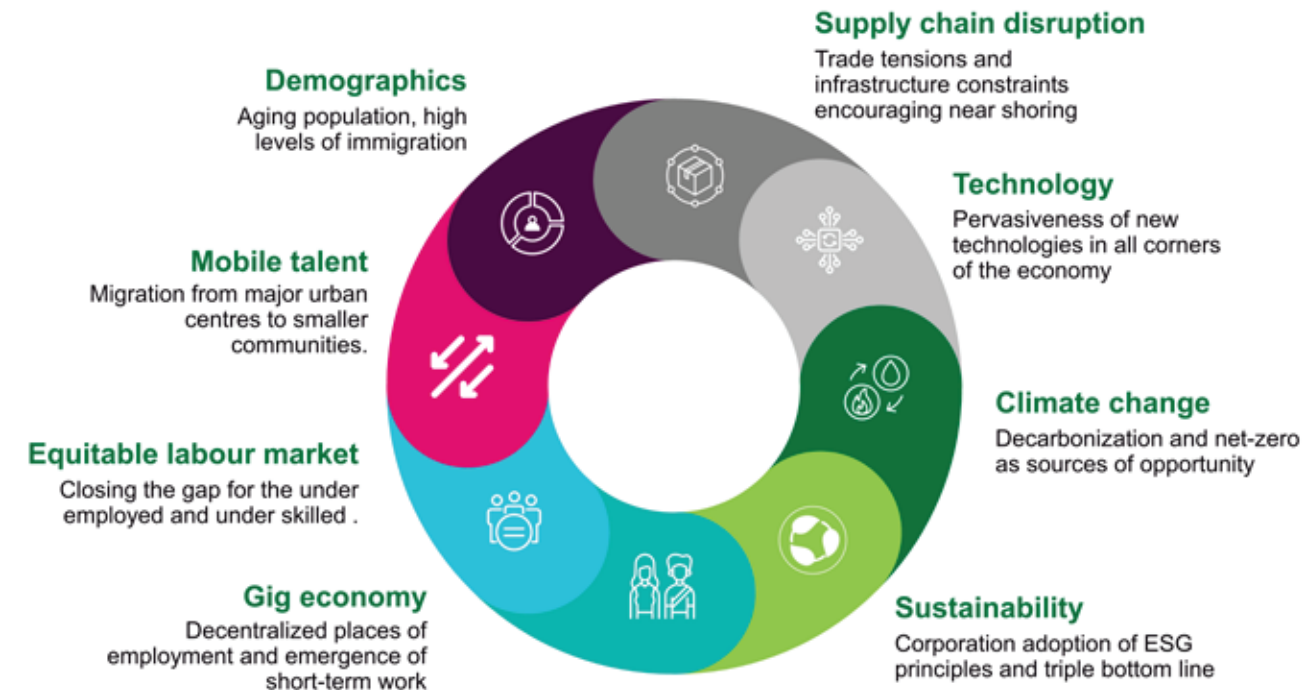
1.3 Issues and challenges

There are numerous global, national and provincial forces that are affecting economic activity and community prosperity. Fundamentally, prosperity is about employment and household income and therefore is closely linked to demographics, participation and talent development—all are changing in ways not experienced in the last half century. The economy is evolving

as well to become service-centric although goods production remains a critical component of the wealth picture. Supply chain issues and a seismic shift in the adoption of technology are challenging conventional notions of what constitutes a secure economic base. Finally, climate change and the drive for sustainability is affecting and will continue to influence all areas

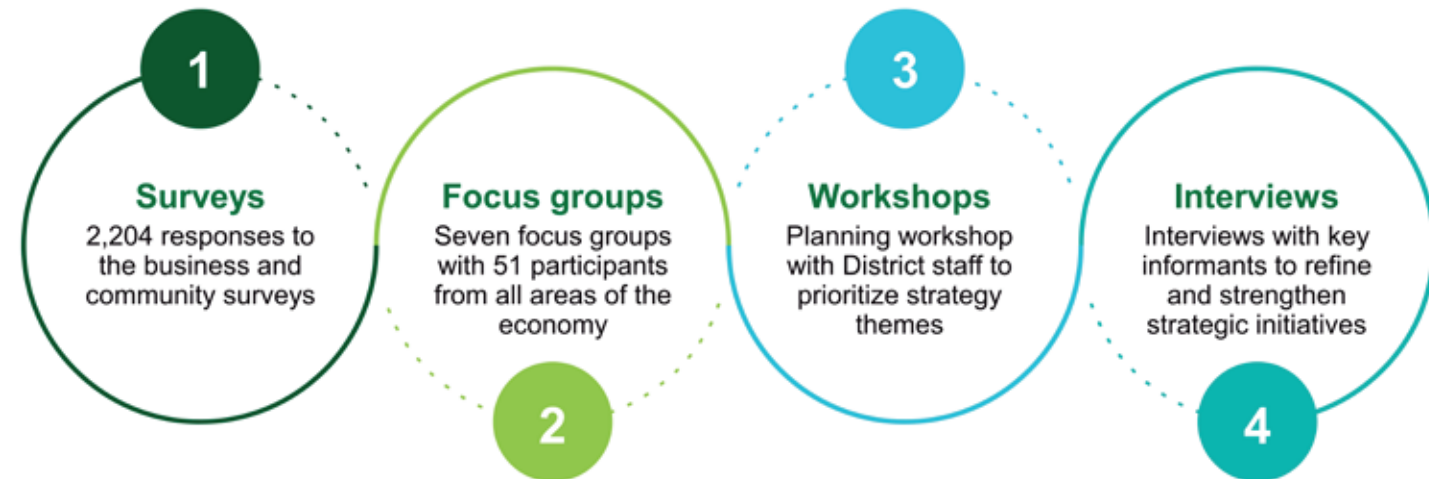
of the economy, human health and civic infrastructure. Some sectors are more exposed than others, with BC's traditional forestry, fisheries and tourism industries particularly vulnerable. But there are opportunities as well in clean energy, resilient and green buildings, energy efficiency and electric vehicles (including transit) where Saanich and its regional partners can take action.

Regional and local issues compound challenges and complicate the economic development landscape for Saanich. Four issues are highlighted here, beginning with regional growth. The capital region will continue to attract in-migrants from across Canada and internationally which will increase demand for housing, infrastructure and services. Economic activity and labour demand will rise as well and bring increasing pressure to make better and more productive use of a limited land base. As the economy further transitions to services, creating more diversity in the economic base, firstly to reduce over-reliance on the government sector and secondly to take advantage of emerging opportunities in the knowledge sectors like healthcare, education and technology will be necessary.



1.4 Community input process

The Strategy was formulated based on the views, expectations and priorities communicated across multiple vectors of primary research. The citizen and business satisfaction survey, launched in late 2022 and managed by BC Stats, received 739 responses across three components, with the business survey receiving 127 responses. The community survey was open for a four-week period between mid February and mid March, 2023, receiving 1,338 responses. Focus groups were held in Saanich on February 28 and March 1, 2023 at the Cedar Hill Golf Course, with 51 participants engaged in discussion on the community's strategic economic strengths, challenges and opportunities. Two planning workshops were held with District staff to review and prioritize the strategy framework. Finally, key informant interviews were undertaken in May and June to provide guidance on strategy direction and priorities. The engagement program allowed residents and businesses to express their opinions on the best course of action for Saanich in its economic development planning.



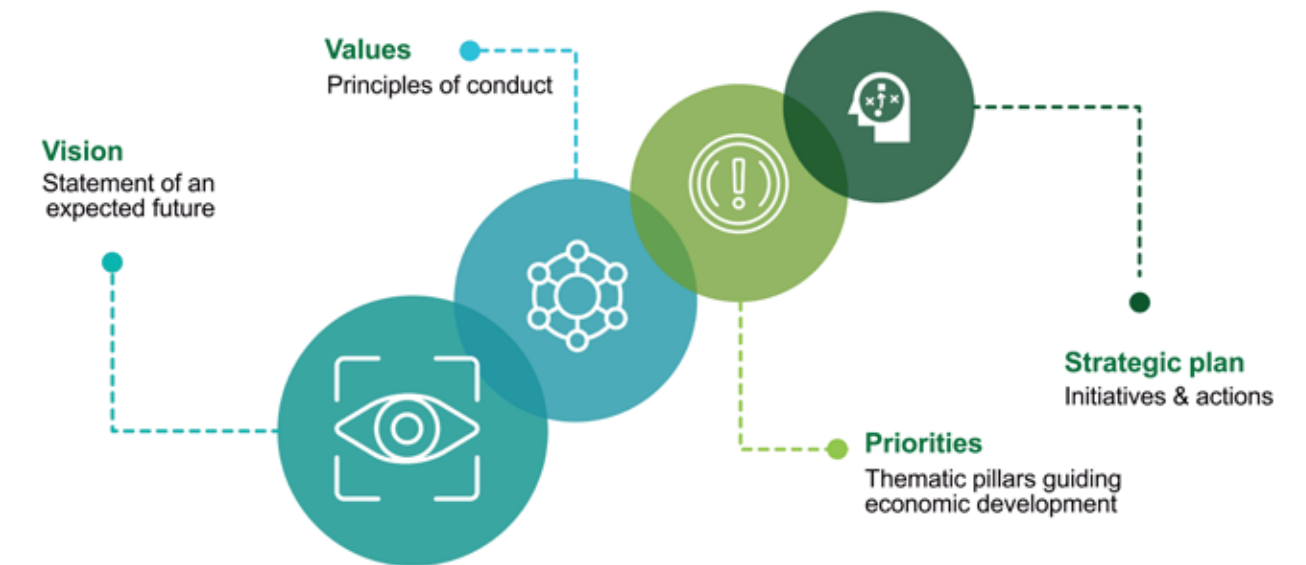
1.5 Implications for Saanich

Amid the increasing pace of economic, social and environmental change, Saanich and the capital region will be challenged to enhance its employment base, productivity levels and household income that underlies community prosperity. South Island Prosperity Partnership's call to action is to "embrace big, bold ideas that will prepare our region ... for the continued growth to come and preserve it for future generations." Saanich can join this challenge by embracing policies and encouraging action that rewards innovation, modernized, responsive and adaptive land management, knowledge-based economic activity and a skilled, adaptable workforce that will sustain a prosperous and sustainable future.



1.6 The strategy framework

The framework for the Strategy comprises a vision, value statements and priorities. It starts with a general articulation of a future expected economy (vision), describes the principles that will guide the practice of economic development (values) and provides thematic structure for grouping initiatives into logical areas of common interest.



1.7 Vision

The local economy is green, innovative and knowledge focused. The community's competitive assets, including its post-secondary institutions, are being leveraged through alliances with regional partners. The business climate is positive, responsive and balanced, with new investment flowing to Saanich's developing growth centres and corridors. Businesses are competitive, flexible and adaptable in an era of rapid change while trade and export activities are flourishing. The new economic diversity is benefiting an inclusive labour market that is well paid, allowing residents, workers and their families to live and do business affordably in Saanich.

1.8 Values

The values that guided the formulation of the Strategy reflect the views and priorities articulated during the engagement process in respect of regional alignment, business climate, human capital and sustainability. Sustainability has interacting economic, human and environmental dimensions in which the current generation fulfills its needs by balancing economic growth, environmental care and social well-being. A significant challenge for sustainable development (and this Strategy) is reconciling generally supported notions of what is good for the community with support for on-the-ground projects and initiatives that impact people in space and time.

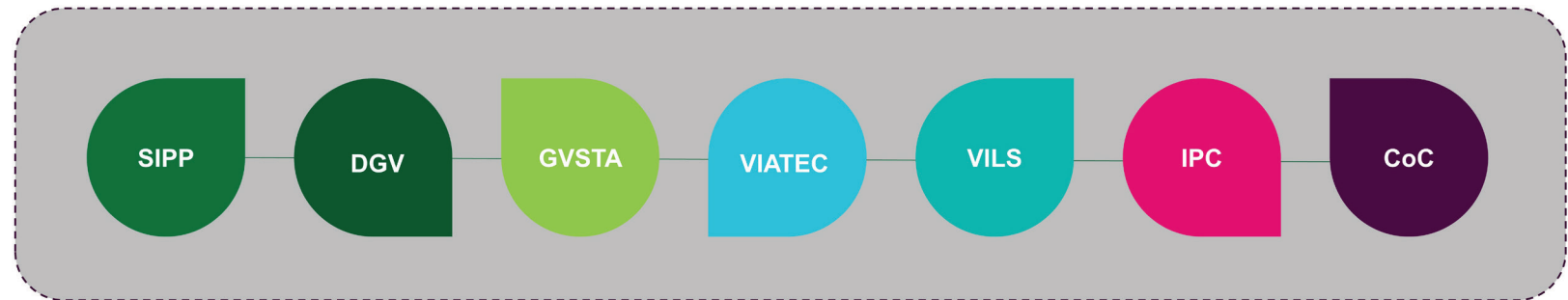


1.9 Partnerships

Saanich is part of the capital region economy, sharing a common labour market, housing market, economic base, sector dependencies, supply chains and critical infrastructure. Policies and activities for boosting economic performance locally should therefore be oriented to the regional perspective. The Strategy prioritizes regional partnerships where significant efficiencies can be realized through reduced overlaps, duplication, and competing efforts. Central to regional partnerships is the South Island Prosperity Partnership (SIPP) of which Saanich is a member

and supports financially. The significant potential in Saanich for sport tourism and hospitality assets can be realized by working closely with Destination Greater Victoria (DGV) and the Greater Victoria Sport Tourism Commission (GVSTA). The Victoria Innovation, Advanced Technology and Entrepreneurship Council (VIATEC) and Vancouver Island Life Sciences Association (VILS) are leading regional efforts to advance the technology sector, which provides an opportunity for local alignment and leverage. The Indigenous Prosperity Centre (IPC), which provides Indigenous thought leadership toward

regional economic reconciliation, can provide guidance and partnership opportunities for action in Saanich. Finally, the Greater Victoria and Saanich Peninsula chambers of commerce have members based in Saanich—there is an overarching interest in a positive business climate and supportive public policy that allows business and their employees to prosper.

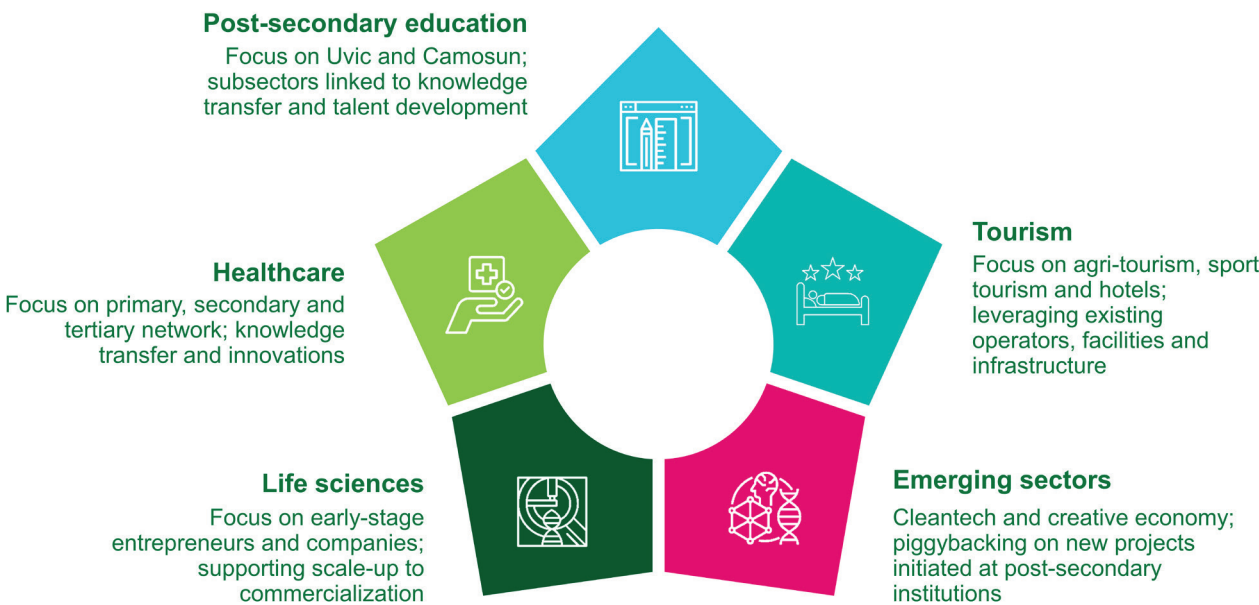


1.10 Target sectors

Saanich has assets and advantages that predispose it to certain industries and economic activities. A location adjacent to the provincial capital, access to an exceptional natural environment and home to major institutions have propelled investment and employment in the government, healthcare, education, tourism and logistics sectors. At the same time, it has insurmountable constraints in its limited employment land base that rule out land-intensive major industry and manufacturing.

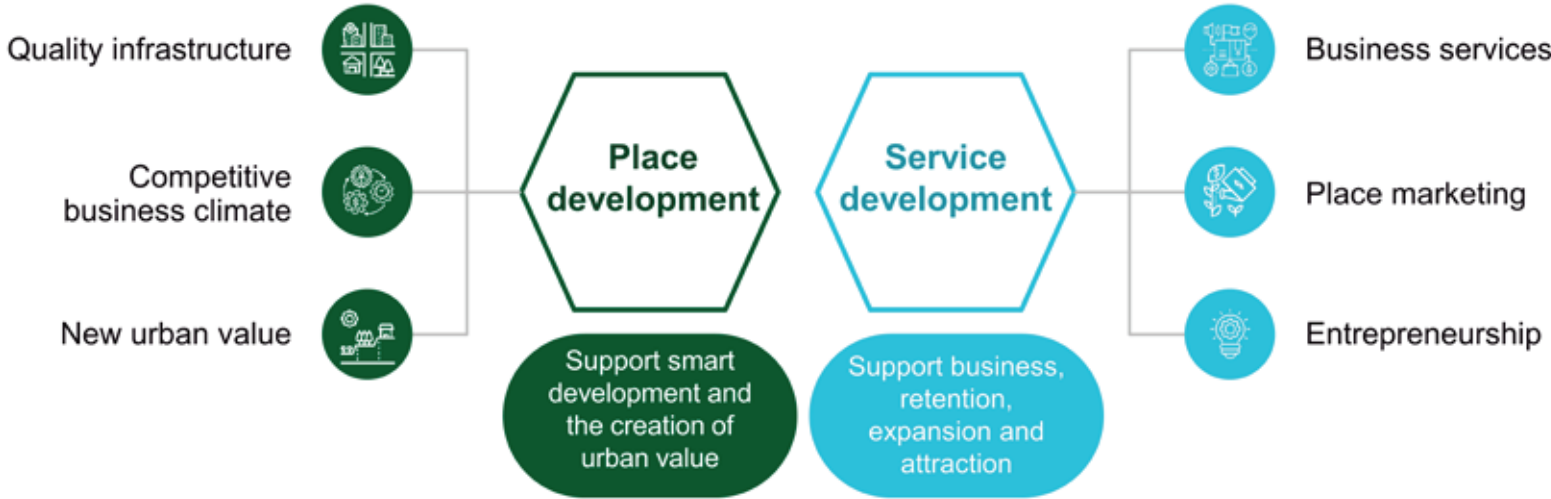
The target sectors for which Saanich already has competitive advantages or exhibits cluster potential are as follows.

Post-secondary education , healthcare and tourism are already mature sectors however the growth potential and opportunities for value-added activities is encouraging. Life sciences and emerging sectors like cleantech and the creative economy are showing early signs of progress and represent a pathway to the employment drivers of tomorrow. What binds these targets is an overarching focus on knowledge-led economic diversification that uphold and reinforce economic objectives articulated in the District’s OCP and Strategic Plan.



1.11 Priorities

The Strategy has two foundational priorities, first place making based on quality infrastructure, a competitive business climate and new urban value in the form of the OCP's knowledge centres and corridors. The Economic Development Office can support existing District policies to draw in private sector interest and business activity that will leverage government investment in infrastructure and municipal services like transit. It should also provide services directly to businesses, entrepreneurs, investors and institutions that are responsible for creating prosperity through employment and income to working families.



1.12 Place development

Saanich will experience significant population growth over the coming decades, which will lead to expansion in the housing stock, infrastructure and services. Ongoing investment in economic assets, for example in its centres and corridors, will play a key role in making a future-proof, sustainable community. Employment land for industrial, commercial, office and institutional uses will be increasingly valuable especially in primary growth areas, the Uptown Core and Schools, Knowledge Centres and Institutional Lands as designated in the OCP. Progress will be made linking areas together with neighbourhoods following the 15-minute city (FMC) model which will improve quality of life, contribute to social cohesion and create new urban value. For this all to work it will be necessary to leverage private investment and have vibrant businesses. The current OCP (draft) highlights the benefits to the local economy that can be achieved by providing good service delivery, consistent, enhanced public services, and a fair, timely, transparent and effective development and business regulatory framework. The OCP also articulates how coordination through integration and collaboration can collectively foster a positive attitude toward economic development.

Recommended initiatives are as follows:

Quality economic infrastructure	Competitive business climate	New urban value
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Affordable housing15-Minute cityTransit services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Competitive regulationsModernized bylawsDigital servicesTax competitivenessTransparentdevelopment costsEffective incentivesShort-term rentalsIntelligent city	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Employment landsIndustrial landsHotel offerSport tourism facilities

1.13 Service development

A core economic development function is business retention and expansion (BRE). Approximately 80 percent of new jobs and capital investment comes from companies that already exist in the community and BRE focuses on understanding the issues they face and how to respond to their needs. The objective of BRE is to create a responsive business climate for existing businesses in the community. A successful BRE program can also inform the attraction of new investment through place marketing

activities. BRE+A services concentrate on growth-oriented sectors where there is above-average potential for generating positive economic outcomes and companies engaged in trade and export activities, which are a foundation of the local and regional economic base. Regional organizations involved in economic development can be engaged to form partnerships, leverage resources and enhance service delivery. Saanich can also take advantage of BC's robust human capital ecosystem through partnerships and initiatives

to improve labour supply and quality with a focus on high-potential target sectors. Finally, Saanich can nurture the knowledge-based economy by assisting local entrepreneurs overcome barriers to growth. Young companies account for about 20% of employment but create almost half of new jobs. Entrepreneurship can play a vital role in the ongoing diversification of the regional economy, exploiting disruptive and emerging technologies to create new sources of productive economic capacity, jobs and community wealth.

Recommended initiatives are as follows:

Business services	Place marketing	Entrepreneurship
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Business retention and expansionBusiness facilitationFilmSport tourismBusiness improvement areasLabour market program accessIndigenous partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Economic development micrositeNews and storiesProof pointsPositioningInvestment readinessInvestment attraction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Networking and partnershipsSupportive assetsKnowledge transferInnovative financing

1.14 Implementation

The plan horizon for this Strategy is five years. Implementation is contingent on three inputs, staff time, funding and partnerships. An Economic Development Advisory Committee has been established and will provide support to the Economic Development Office. Strategies and action plans are guideways and always subject to tactical response and adaptation to conditions and events as they unfold on the ground.

Performance measurement will be undertaken to support ongoing strategic, tactical and operational planning, report to key audiences and provide accountability for the resources used in delivering economic development services.





2. Introduction

2.1 Project background

Saanich is undertaking an economic development strategy (the “Strategy”) to guide its newly established Economic Development Office. The District requires a vision for the local economy, specific implementable actions to achieve economic resiliency post COVID-19 and a path forward to grow and sustain a prosperous zero-carbon economy.

The Strategy leverages Saanich’s assets and advantages and identifies gaps that require attention so the local economy can keep pace with expected population growth in the decades ahead. The Strategy is the first step in bringing together people, place and business into a cohesive, coherent pathway for a prosperous economic future.

Two reports were prepared as part of the plan process, this Strategy and a previously released **Current Situation Assessment** that provided background research and context on demographic, labour market, business and sector conditions, key trends, an analysis of community plans and assets and an assessment of strengths, challenges and opportunities.

2.2 Methodology

Strategy content is based on a compilation and synthesis of multiple sources of research. Secondary data sources, statistics, documents and studies were assembled and reviewed to describe economic conditions and trends in the District and capital region. A list of all references is provided in the **Current Situation Assessment** while those cited in this report are shown in the closing chapter.

Primary research consisted of two surveys, seven focus groups, two workshops, a public open house and key informant interviews conducted between September 2022 and June 2023. The citizen and business satisfaction survey (BC Stats 2023), launched by the District prior to the commencement of the Economic

Development Strategy project, received 739 responses across three components, with the business survey receiving 127 responses. Further information on methodology and results can be found on the District [website](#).

The community survey was open for a four-week period between mid February and mid March, 2023, receiving 1,338 responses. Feedback was received on community, development and economic issues and future expectations for the future economy.

Focus groups were held in Saanich on February 28 and March 1, 2023 at the Cedar Hill Golf Course. A total of 51 participants engaged in discussion on the community’s strategic economic

strengths, challenges and opportunities and how they might affect the direction and practice of economic development moving forward.

Two planning workshops were held with District staff to review and prioritize a strategy framework. An Open House was held on May 13, 2023 to present current situation information on the local economy and a preliminary framework on the Strategy.

Key informant interviews were undertaken in May and June to provide guidance on strategy direction and priorities.

2.3 Work steps and timing

The work plan for this project took place over a six-month period beginning in January, 2023 and closing with a draft Plan in June, 2023.



2.4 The strategy context

The Strategy is being prepared and delivered now as a framework for action over the next five years by the Economic Development office. As the national and provincial economies recover from COVID-related impacts and the region grows its population and economy Saanich can structure its economic development policies and services to realize the prosperity and resiliency objectives it has prioritized in the Official Community Plan (OCP) and other plans.

- There have been numerous District housing, neighbourhood, transportation, agri-food and other plans over the last five years that have set out economic objectives. The draft update to the OCP has set policies for supporting economic infrastructure, economic diversification, industrial land and knowledge centres. This is echoed in the District's Strategic Plan which envisions a diversified economic base, supportive business climate, protected employment lands and strategic cooperation with key partners. Regional plans include South Island Prosperity Partnership's (SIPP) strategic plan and the Capital Regional District's (CRD) Growth Management Strategy.
- Saanich greatly benefits from a diversified business tax base that generates a sustainable flow of revenues to the District. Business mill rates are much higher than residential rates and in many cases businesses consume fewer municipal services. The tax burden on all taxpayers is lessened if intensive, productive use of employment land with successful businesses is achieved.
- Global economic, social and environmental forces are impacting communities on many different levels and at an increasingly rapid rate of change. The job and wealth creators of yesterday will be much different than the those of tomorrow, which will challenge policy makers to navigate a transition to a sustainable, decarbonized economy.



- Saanich has positioned itself as a sustainable community committed to environmental integrity, social well-being and economic vibrancy. This “three pillar” approach to building a sustainable community is reflected in the OCP and is foundational to the District’s various strategies and approach to service delivery. The District’s commitment to environmental integrity is reflected in key strategies such as the Climate Plan, the Urban Forest Strategy, the Environmental Policy Framework and the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy. The recently adopted Asset Management Strategy is a road map for continuous improvement towards achieving sustainable service delivery. Economic development services can support and strengthen this brand positioning by putting sustainability principles at the heart of its economic planning and decision making.
- Finding the talent and labour to keep the economy thriving will be a growing challenge for communities in the developed world. Saanich is well positioned to attract this talent given its sought-after quality of life, good health care system, safe community, renewable energy grid, growing cycling network and vibrant post-secondary institutions. There are areas of concern such as a shortage of family physicians, but overall, this “X-factor” can play an important role in creating an inclusive, talented labour pool, providing the local economy can offer incomes that make living affordable. The living wage in Greater Victoria is among the highest in the province so retaining and attracting talent will require innovative action.
- The engagement process indicated housing affordability, transportation and infrastructure, and planning and development as community development priorities with business retention, community health and safety, workforce development and entrepreneurship as economic development priorities. The feedback from the surveys, focus groups, planning workshops and interviews was consistently in support of future proofing Saanich to protect its quality of life while building a spirit of innovation and sustainability that will drive prosperity and resiliency.

3. Drivers of change

3.1 Macro drivers

Demographic change – The effects of demographic change are manifested in many ways, most obviously in a rising average population age and corresponding decline in labour force participation. Heightened generational differences in work attitudes and expectations are clearly emerging as baby boomers leave the labour market and younger generations take their place. In Canada, increasing immigration and immigrant labour force share are affecting workplace planning, practices and productivity.

Mobile talent – There has never been a better time for smaller cities and regions to compete for investment and talent attraction by leveraging technology. The world’s mega cities are struggling to cope with urbanization impacts like housing availability and affordability. In the US, LinkedIn has found that in 2020 mobile workers

were leaving major tech centres like San Francisco, Chicago, Boston and New York for mid-sized cities like Madison, Cleveland, Sacramento and Hartford. Stats Canada has reported that in 2021 Montreal and Toronto lost population as residents chose smaller cities like Kitchener-Waterloo, Kelowna, and Saskatoon for reasons of personal health, ability to work remotely and more affordable housing costs. In British Columbia, smaller regions are also seeing new residents that are mobile, with remote workers making lifestyle choices that prioritize safety, security, affordability and recreation.

Equality of access to the labour market – The automation and digitalization of the workforce was well under way when the Covid-19 pandemic struck and has accelerated since. Businesses are better prepared and more resilient today than three

years ago when it comes to hiring and retaining talent, while workers have more opportunities than ever, even as highly automatable jobs decline. However, there remains a significant gap in labour market performance with the unemployed and under-employed less able to participate in higher-skill and higher-pay jobs. Economic development organizations, workforce organizations, education and training providers, businesses and government have important roles to play in closing this gap (IEDC 2021).

The gig economy – The COVID-19 pandemic has led to an increase in the number of Canadians who participate in short-term contracts or freelance work, such as rideshare drivers, freelance writers and graphic designers, software engineers or contractors active in many different industries. These gig workers now represent more than one



in 10 Canadian adults (13 per cent), and more than one in three Canadian businesses (37 per cent) employ gig workers (Payments Canada 2021). The gig economy has decentralized places of employment and encouraged employers to be more flexible in their hiring and recruitment policies.

Supply chain rebalancing – Every industry is evaluating and rebalancing supply chains because of short-term impacts from Covid and the long-term effects of over-reliance on and vulnerability to leading exporters. Supply chain issues and global trade tensions are spurring onshoring and nearshoring of industrial and manufacturing facilities. According to McKinsey, a consultancy, as much as a quarter of global goods exports, or \$4.5 trillion, could shift by 2025 (McKinsey 2021). Opportunities for more domestic participants in national and North American supply chains will continue to emerge.

Technology – The adoption and use of new technology is accelerating across the human landscape from consumers and businesses to governments and institutions. Automation and natural language processing has moved from the fringes to everyday use in nearly every job in every business process and industry. It is being adopted to drive innovation, improve efficiency

and enable new business models. Augmented reality and virtual reality continue to advance, offering more immersive meeting environments where people can talk, brainstorm, and co-create. Blockchain technology will progress as companies create more decentralized products and services, including decentralized data storage and encryption as a safer alternative to cloud services. Digital twinning allows engineers to test concepts and innovations virtually then create them in the real-world using 3D printing technology. Nature is becoming “editable” through gene editing to correct DNA mutations, solve the problem of food allergies, increase the health of crops, or even edit human characteristics. Other developing technologies that are fundamentally affecting economic activity include quantum computing, green technologies, robotics, autonomous systems and factories, and sustainable technologies that underlie the circular economy (Marr 2022).

Climate change – Climate change is a growing global concern. Extreme weather conditions are increasing in frequency and severity, with implications for all areas of the economy, especially agriculture and food production. In Canada, droughts, wildfires and floods are adversely affecting production of top agricultural exports. Climate change is affecting economic sectors differently, but nearly all will experience disruption of business models and supply chains at some point owing to resource scarcity, regulatory and political uncertainty, mitigation and insurance costs and adoption of environmental, social and governance (ESG) principles (IEDC 2022). Municipalities are on the front lines of climate change, having to deal with outcomes arising from forest fires and heat domes to rising sea levels and flooding. Studies have shown that investments in resilient infrastructure have a return on investment of \$6 in future averted losses for every \$1 spent

proactively (FCM 2020). In 2019 Saanich Council declared a Climate Emergency in response to decades of scientific research that demonstrates the need for urgent action to reduce global warming and adapt to a changing climate. In respect of the practice of economic development, there will be opportunities to access federal and provincial dollars for risk mitigation, reduce GHG emissions, expand the renewable energy system, improve economic assets and strengthen climate change resiliency through robust supply chains, institutional and technological assets and supportive public policies.

Sustainability – Concerns that globalization and growth may be exceeding the earth’s bio-capacity have been around for decades and the impacts and costs are now being realized. This has generated much greater recognition of the critical need for sustainable development practices, from rethinking the built environment

and our use of water, transportation, energy, and materials, to addressing inequality and poverty reduction and pursuit of a green economy. In a recent sustainability action report, Deloitte reported that nearly three in five executives reported having implemented a cross-functional ESG working group to drive sustainability policy and practice. The other two were taking steps to do so (Deloitte 2022). An increasing number of companies and executives are prepared to measure and disclose GHG emissions including many Saanich based businesses reporting their climate actions through the international CDP (Carbon Disclosure Project).

3.2 Regional drivers

Regional growth – The population of the CRD grew 83% between 1976 and 2021 and comparable levels of growth are expected for at least the next 25 years. It is the second most-populated metropolitan area in BC and the 15th largest in Canada. As the largest municipality in the capital region and on Vancouver Island, Saanich will continue to grow, with an estimated 27,000 new residents expected by 2046, requiring approximately 15,000 new dwelling units. This will intensify growth management issues and demand innovative ways to protect and enhance the environment and the economy so quality of life is maintained. The region is experiencing high housing costs and a lack of affordable housing options, which can exacerbate poverty levels. It is grappling with traffic congestion and limited transit options. Southern Vancouver Island is known for its natural beauty but protecting green spaces, addressing climate change, managing waste, recycling managing water resources and reducing consumption while preserving local ecosystems is a major challenge. Finally, building positive relationships and addressing historical and ongoing injustices with local Indigenous communities is an ongoing priority.

Housing – The Saanich Housing Strategy notes that the cost of renting and owning in Saanich, like the CRD in general, has risen significantly in recent years. Affordable single-detached housing is out of reach for most median-income households while the rental market is unaffordable for most lone-person households with a single income. Rental housing is in short supply at a time when new demand is concentrated and growing. Vacancies are low and costs rising either pushing renter households out of the community or preventing new families from moving in. The situation is acute for the most vulnerable, people with disabilities, seniors, families, young adults and the homeless (Urban Matters 2021). The economic implications for the CRD and Saanich are far reaching. It is true that a rising housing market benefits homeowners however it can also exacerbate the inequitable distribution of wealth to homeowners (primarily older people), while the effective living standards for those who do not own a house (often the young and vulnerable) decline. In terms of economic development, unaffordable housing harms labour availability, recruitment, productivity and retention. It also adversely affects population health and even birth rates (FP 2019). An obvious policy response is to encourage more housebuilding in a form that is attainable for median income earners.

Economic diversification – The economy of the Capital Regional District (CRD) is relatively diverse. It encompasses a range of sectors and industries, contributing to its overall economic stability. The region is home to the provincial capital resulting in a significant presence of government offices and public administration activities. There is a thriving technology sector, with a concentration of software development, biotechnology, clean energy, and other innovative industries while tourism is based on nature-based activities, arts and culture and niche experiences like agri-tourism and sport tourism. Several post-secondary institutions, including the University of Victoria, Camosun College and Royal Roads University contribute to the economy through their operations, research activities, student spending, and the development of a skilled workforce. The manufacturing base includes aerospace, marine, food processing and high-tech. The health care sector, with numerous hospitals, medical centers, research facilities and a buoyant life sciences industry is a growing force. But there are warning signs: GDP per capita is comparable to the provincial average but well behind that of Metro Vancouver, labour shortages are prevalent across all industries and new investment in emerging sectors is lacking.

Land and building availability – Availability of land/buildings is one of the most important criteria used by site selection professionals in locating business operations (ACCE 2022). In the retail and commercial space, despite the rise of e-commerce during the pandemic, shoppers are returning to physical stores and seeking experiences not available online. For industrial uses, the third-party logistics industry is expected to continue driving demand as more companies look to outsource their supply chain processes. Many industries and companies are evaluating their office space needs in a post-pandemic era of office flexibility, hybrid options and work-from-home opportunities. Some workers will return to the office while others may not entirely or only partially. This will have an impact on total office space demand and place a premium on modern, flexible workspaces. Highly differentiated office space will do better than commodity space, keeping vacancy rates elevated amongst older, less flexible building types (CBRE 2023).



3.3 Implications for Saanich

Amid the increasing pace of economic, social and environmental change, Saanich will be challenged to maintain its employment, household income and community prosperity. In its most recent strategic plan, SIPP cautions that the broader Cascadia region is facing imposing growth, environmental, housing, congestion and economic challenges. There is a need to “embrace big, bold ideas that will prepare our ... for the continued growth to come and preserve it for future generations.” (SIPP 2022) Saanich can meet this challenge head on by embracing modernized, responsive and adaptive land management, pursuing knowledge-based economic activity and nurturing a skilled, adaptable workforce. Protecting its employment land base will be vital. Greater engagement with local businesses, institutions and community partners will be needed to achieve a prosperous and sustainable future.



4. Plan direction

4.1 A vision for the future

The following themes for the future economy of Saanich were identified during the engagement process and align with economic objectives set out in the updated OCP (DOS 2023), corporate Strategic Plan (DOS 2019) and the latest Annual Report (DOS 2023):

The local economy is diverse, green, innovative and knowledge focused. The community's competitive assets, including its post-secondary institutions, are being leveraged through alliances with regional partners. The business climate is positive, responsive and balanced, with new investment flowing to Saanich's developing growth centres and corridors. Businesses are competitive, flexible and adaptable in an era of rapid change while trade and export activities are flourishing. The new economic diversity is benefiting an inclusive labour market that is well paid, allowing residents, workers and their families to live and do business affordably in Saanich.

4.2 Values

The following values will guide strategic thinking and implementation of economic development services over the next five years.

- **Act locally, think regionally:** advance community prosperity with local action that aligns with and supports the regional economy.
- **Balanced and fair regulatory climate:** strive to be competitive, balanced and fair in regulatory matters so the community can develop social and economic assets that attracts the private capital needed to support employment and household wealth.
- **Quality services:** build quality infrastructure, amenities and services, while harnessing technology to better serve residents and businesses today and in the future.
- **A skilled, talented work force:** continuously support a robust labour market by upskilling talent and productivity and supporting inclusivity that allows and encourages all people of working age, especially the underemployed, to participate in paid work.
- **A knowledge economy:** collaborate with the District's major institutions, businesses and First Nations to drive innovation and clean, knowledge-led economic activities.
- **A sustainable economy:** prioritize trade and export activities that reduce or limit negative impacts on the natural environment.

4.3 Regional partnerships

Saanich is a metro municipality that participates in many regional organizations and initiatives in matters of common or overlapping interest. The District is a member of the CRD, which comprises 13 municipalities and three electoral areas on southern Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands, serving about 440,000 people. First Nations with traditional territories and reserve lands in the region include the **Lək̓ʷəŋən** speaking peoples (**Xwsepsum** [Esquimalt] and Songhees Nations), the **W̱SÁNEĆ** peoples (**STÁUTW** – Tsawout, **BOKÉĆEN** – Pauquachin, **W̱ JOŁEŁP** – Tsartlip, **W̱SIKEM** –Tseycum Nations, and **MÁLEXEŁ** (Malahat Nation), Scia'new Nation (Beecher Bay), T'Sou-ke Nation, and Nuu-chah-nulth speaking peoples, Pacheedaht Nation.

The CRD was incorporated to provide regional decision-making on matters that transcend municipal boundaries and to enable more effective service delivery through regionwide or shared delivery models. It provides regional water, solid waste, wastewater treatment, parks and recreation, housing and 911 call answer services.

The economy of Saanich is likewise threaded into the broader capital region economy. It does not stand alone but shares a common labour market, housing market, economic base, sector dependencies and supply chains. Critical infrastructure such as ports, ferries and highways are built to service the region. There is elevated labour mobility with significant portions of resident workers commuting to other municipalities to their place of work. In the eyes of outside investors and visitors, Saanich is often indistinguishable from Greater Victoria. Policies and programs for boosting economic performance should therefore be grounded in a Southern Vancouver Island perspective and take full advantage of regional resources and expertise.



The Strategy emphasizes regional partnerships where significant efficiencies can be realized through reduced overlaps, duplication, and competing efforts. Importantly, Saanich will engage and support regional economic development capacity where it offers access to programs, services and expertise it is unable to provide itself. The following organizations and their respective mandates will play an important role in the delivery and implementation of this Strategy.

- **South Island Prosperity Partnership (SIPP)** – SIPP is an alliance of over 70 public and private-sector partners in Greater Victoria, 11 local governments (including Saanich), nine First Nations, three post-secondary institutions, nine industry associations and non-profits, and more than 30 major employers. It offers services and programs in trade and investment, First Nations economic development, COVID recovery, ocean technologies and workforce development.
- **Destination Greater Victoria (DGV)** – DGV is a not-for-profit industry association responsible for the development and promotion of tourism in Greater Victoria. It works with Greater Victoria's tourism industry, while promoting and developing tourism throughout the area. Its major services include tourism marketing, product development, destination development, and workforce development.
- **Greater Victoria Sport Tourism Commission (GVSTC)** – GVSTC is a not-for-profit entity dedicated to increasing the quality and quantity of sport-related events and activities hosted in Greater Victoria. It undertakes sport tourism marketing, sporting event bidding and hosting support, funding support, VIP hosting, facility and venue promotion, and economic impact studies.

- **Victoria Innovation, Advanced Technology and Entrepreneurship Council (VIATEC)** – VIATEC's mission is to cultivate the most cohesive tech community in the world by providing resources to tackle shared opportunities and challenges while boosting a sense of belonging and shaping our region. Services include regional and tech sector promotion, ecosystem networking, talent development, education and mentoring.
- **Vancouver Island Life Sciences Association (VILS)** – VILS is a volunteer non-profit that brings together the life-sciences community in Victoria and around the Island and connects it with the global life science community.

- **Indigenous Prosperity Centre (IPC)** – IPC is affiliated with SIPP, IPC providing Indigenous thought leadership toward economic reconciliation. The Victoria Native Friendship Centre (serving the urban Indigenous) and the BC Métis Federation are also potential partners.
- **Chambers of Commerce** – Both the Greater Victoria and Saanich Peninsula chambers of commerce have members based in Saanich. Their common objective is to advance existing business, attract new economic opportunities, constructively influence public policy and governments in supporting a healthy free enterprise system and build value for their members.

- **Business Associations** – There are many business and industry associations such as the Urban Development Institute – Capital Region, CSA Group and Family Business Association, that are potential partners for initiatives contemplated by the municipality which may affect member interests.

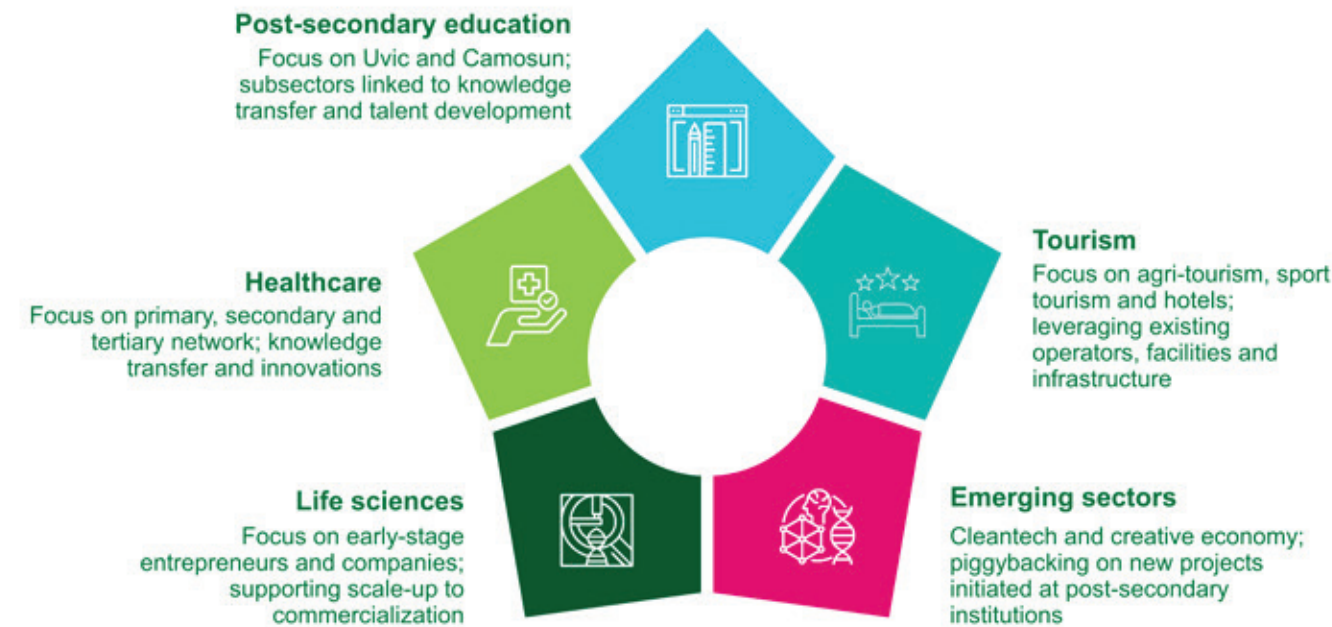


4.4 Target sectors

Saanich has assets, capacity and advantages that underlie its economic base with high levels of employment in a handful of key sectors, including government, health care, education, tourism and logistics. In the case of its hospitals and post-secondary institutions it possesses strategic economic assets only a select few communities can claim. At the same time, it has a significant constraint in a limited employment land base that hinders investment by industries that have land-intensive location requirements, for example, large laydown sites for construction products and services and greenfield manufacturing sites. Still, the District can mitigate

its disadvantages with smarter and innovative land use and municipal services that enable it to attract investment in the job growth sectors of the future.

The sectors for which Saanich already has competitive advantages or could achieve employment concentration are noted following. Targeting high-potential sectors does not mean other sectors of the economy are not important or ignored in the Strategy. Business retention and expansion activities will consider any sector where opportunities exist for Saanich.



- **Post-secondary education** – The University of Victoria contributed close to \$2 billion in added income and one in nine jobs to the Greater Victoria economy in 2019. Its researchers and innovators are responsible for hundreds of millions of dollars of spending and business spinoffs. It is an employer, developer, investor, thought leader and community partner with an expanding role in engineering, health care, arts and culture, ocean technology, cleantech and many other areas of the economy. Resources include tools, expertise and space on campus to help entrepreneurs develop their ideas and partner clients with advisors and mentors from outside the university who provide valuable input and connections. Camosun College supports more than 10,000 regional jobs and approximately \$1 billion in operating, capital, student/alumni spending (Camosun College 2020). It is involved in several areas of applied research, hosting the Centre for Film Production and Digital Media, and Camosun Innovates, BC's first Technology Access Centre and a Canadian leader in practical problem solving.
- **Healthcare** – Royal Jubilee Hospital is a 550-bed general hospital offering critical-care, surgery, diagnostics, emergency facilities and other patient programs. With over 4,300 staff and physicians on its 37-acre site it is Vancouver Island's oldest and largest healthcare centre. It serves more than 90,000 patients each year, providing comprehensive hospital and emergency care along with teaching services to medical students. It is the Island's referral centre for burn, cancer, cardiac, mental health, renal, respiratory, and vascular treatment. It has a state-of-the-art treatment and research facility in the Vancouver Island Cancer Centre. Nearby Victoria General Hospital provides emergency, general surgery, medical treatment services and maternity services. It is also a teaching hospital for UBC's Department of Orthopaedic Surgery. There is an extensive primary and secondary care network in the capital region including local Divisions of Family Practice, physicians, nurse practitioners, allied health providers, First Nations and other community providers and services. The healthcare sector employed 15% of all workers in Saanich in 2021.
- **Agri-tourism and sport tourism** – Saanich has a base of farms, a growing farm to table supply chain, destination gardens and access to growing highway visitor volumes that could be support an agri-tourism gateway for the South Island. The Urban Containment Boundary and ALR theoretically preserve land for future agriculture activity. In sports tourism, it is home to the Pacific Institute for Sport Excellence and Camosun's Centre for Sport & Exercise Education. Numerous facilities at its post-secondary institutions (including UVic's Centre for Athletics, Recreation and Special Abilities), a favourable climate for outdoor sports, and home to a cluster of national sports

organizations are all developable assets. The District has facilities like Saanich Commonwealth Place, parks and trails and amenities that have successfully hosted some sports events in the past. As these assets are expanded for residents and contribute to the active transportation system they become more amenable to sport tourism events. Destination Greater Victoria and the Greater Victoria Sports Tourism Commission provide strategic resources and partnership potential to further Saanich's role as an agri-tourism and sport tourism destination.

- **Life sciences** – There is a small concentration of life sciences activity in Saanich, but it is expanding and has significant growth potential providing there is a pathway for scale-up and commercialization that raises the technology readiness level of locals companies. The District is working with Vancouver Island Life Sciences Association on creating new wetlab space. Vancouver is facing severe lab availability constraints and rapidly rising business costs that opens opportunities for the Southern Vancouver Island as a location alternative. Camosun Innovates is conducting applied research in several areas including medical devices while locally based Starfish Medical is Canada's largest medical device design, development, and contract manufacturing company.

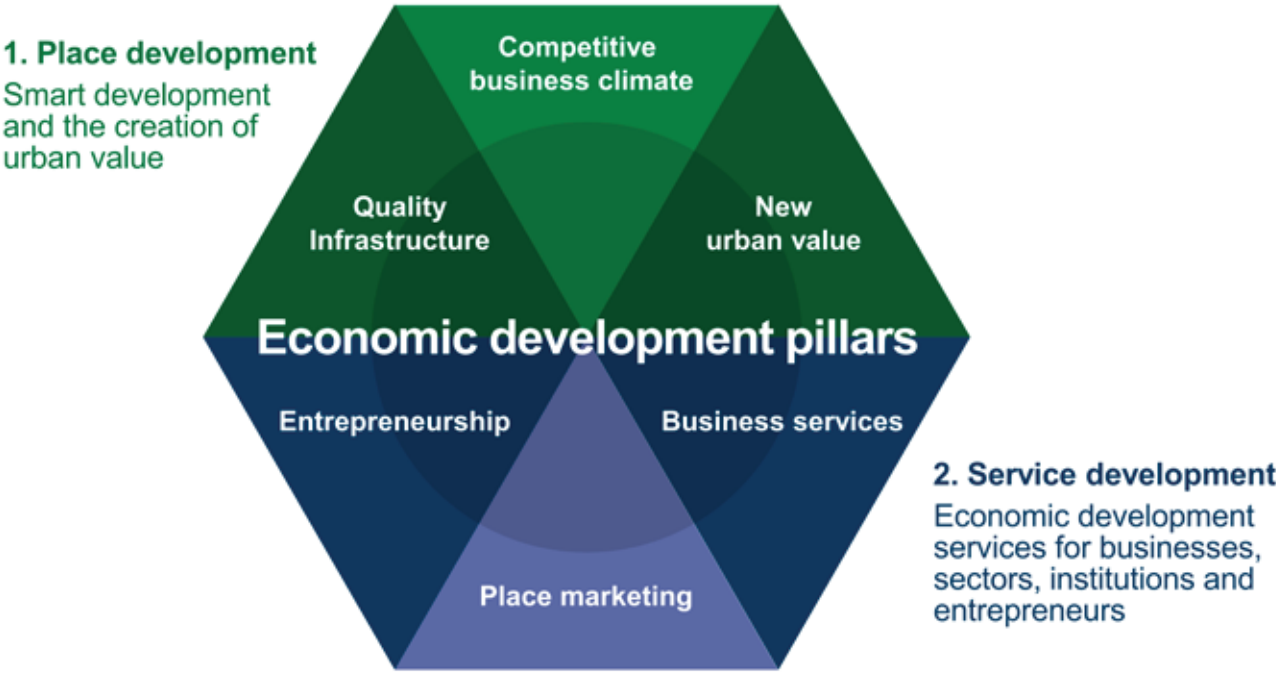
- **Emerging sectors** – ocean technologies, cleantech and the creative economy are emerging sectors with a limited footprint in Saanich, but they have excellent potential given recently announced program and asset investments. SIPP hosts the Centre for Ocean Applied Sustainable Technologies (COAST) which will boost the region's involvement in the global ocean and marine space. The University of Victoria's Institute for Integrated Energy Systems is involved in strategic clean technologies, electrification and system integration, built environment, energy-economy-policy modelling, and integrated planning for water-energy-land systems. It recently received more than \$80 million in federal funding for clean energy projects in remote communities. Meanwhile, global forces such as decarbonization, net-zero commitments, supply chain disruptions, trade and geopolitical tensions and war are creating demand in developed countries for new flexible manufacturing and critical raw materials to drive our increasingly technology-intensive economy (World Economic Forum 2023). Finally, Saanich stands to benefit from Camosun's on-campus sound stages that, although targeted for education purposes, will significantly enhance the film economy in Greater Victoria. Currently there are no dedicated sound stages or studios in the region. Once commissioned, the stages would be able to accommodate much larger productions than is currently the case and create opportunities elsewhere in the value chain.

4.5 Pillars

This Strategy has the following two strategic pillars.

Place development: place development refers to the durable, quality infrastructure provided by the District and other levels of government (including broadband, 5-6G wireless, fibre-optic, fast-transit to commercial cloud providers) as well as civic, social and cultural amenities that underpin civic life and make Saanich a desirable destination for residents, businesses and visitors.

Service development: facilitating interactions among entrepreneurs, investors, businesses, social enterprises and institutions already in the community is a fundamental building block of economic development practice.



5. Economic pillars for Saanich

5.1 Place development

5.1.1 Rationale

Saanich will strive to provide quality, sustainable municipal infrastructure, adaptive land use and a responsive, competitive regulatory system that encourages investment in the community, its people and its businesses.

- The population of Saanich is projected to be 152,497 by 2046 (Licker 2023). As people come to the community they will need housing, use infrastructure and services and contribute to the work force and civic affairs.
- The International Economic Development Council has stated that infrastructure is a critical input to economic development (IEDC 2016). Good infrastructure spurs the competitiveness of local firms, attracts talented companies and workers, encourages private sector investment, and increases jobs and household incomes. For Saanich, ongoing investment in economic assets, for example in its centres and corridors, will play a key role in making a future-proof, sustainable community.
- The District's definition of housing affordability is \$642,000 for larger homes and \$411,000 for those with fewer than two bedrooms (DOS 2023b). The 2022 representative house value in Saanich was \$1,173,000 (GOBC 2023c). Achieving affordability will require more supply, especially in the rental market where affordability issues are acute. The Saanich Housing Strategy proposed an annual increment of 610 new housing units between 2020 and 2025 (Urban Matters 2021), but by 2023 this target has not been reached and there is now a cumulative deficit of housing starts.



- Saanich has 19% of all industrial land in the CRD but that supply is highly constrained by residential uses, the urban containment boundary and the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR). Meanwhile vacancies are at an all-time low and there are no new projects proposed. If the District is to maintain its stable of goods-producing businesses (and the associated tax base), hardline protection of existing industrial land and new investment in intensive uses will be required.
- Employment lands are more than industrial areas they include commercial, mixed-use, civic and institutional, live/work uses in primary growth areas, the Uptown Core and Schools, Knowledge Centres and Institutional Lands as designated in the OCP. Saanich's seven designated centres accommodate much of the commercial, retail and service activity. Industrial lands are primarily located at the Royal Oak Industrial Park and Tennyson Industrial Quarter (Uptown). Key institutional lands, include the knowledge centres associated with the former Glendale Lands, the University of Victoria, Camosun College and Royal Jubilee Hospital.

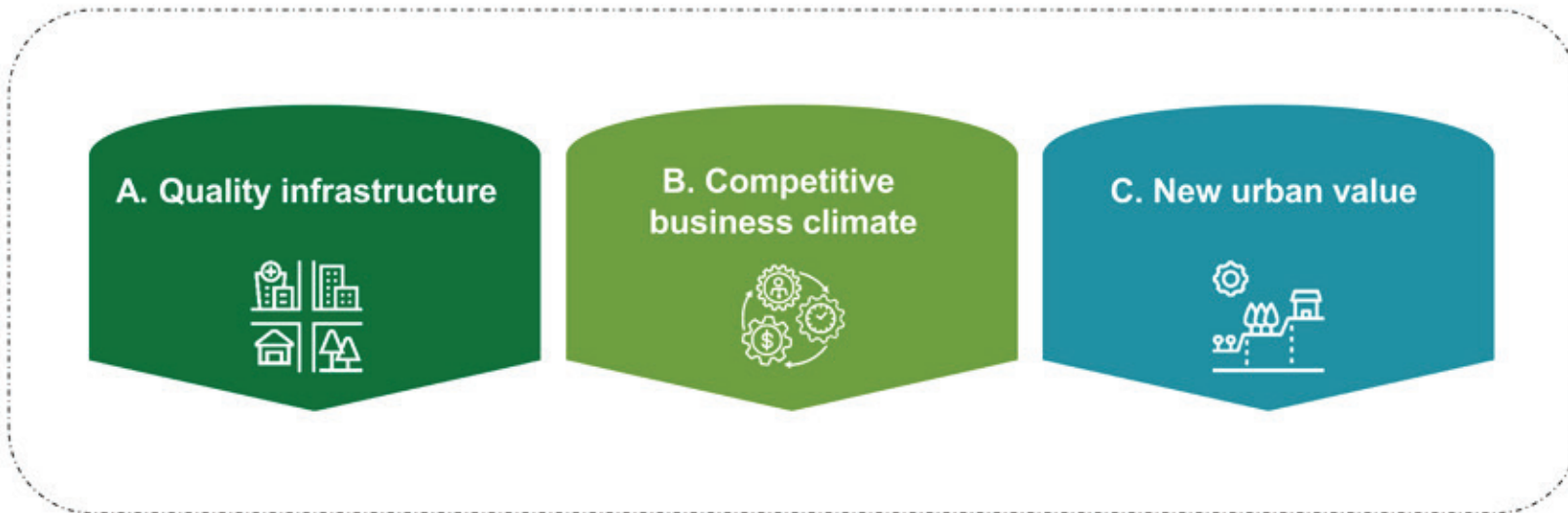
- Saanich's Draft OCP identifies "Make Saanich a 15-minute Community" as one of its strategic land use directions. The focus is on creating a walkable community where all households within the Urban Containment Boundary are within a 15-minute walk (or 1.2 km) of key amenities that support daily living. Examples include grocery stores, schools, parks, workplaces, cultural and recreation spaces, daycare, and healthcare services. Where these amenities do not exist, long-term planning to guide land use change will occur to meet community needs. While walking is the base form of transportation for the Saanich approach, a 15-minute community also relies on access to frequent transit service and high-quality biking amenities to support linkages across neighbourhoods and to higher order services located in larger centres. A 15-minute community includes a range of housing options and provides the opportunity for people of all ages and abilities to engage effectively with and move around the neighbourhood. A mixture of Centres, Villages and Hubs connected by Corridors provide the framework for this concept.

- The business climate is a measure of a community's support for business development. A good climate lets businesses conduct their activities with minimal interference while accessing production inputs and customer markets. In the municipal context, business climate is usually thought of in terms of taxes, service quality and the regulatory regime but increasingly in involves housing and quality of life features like parks and recreation. Saanich is moving forward with steps to improve its development review process (KPMG 2021) and other supporting actions will attract business investment that meets community expectations for vibrancy and resiliency.
- The current OCP (draft) highlights the benefits to the local economy that can be achieved by providing good service delivery, consistent, enhanced public services, and a fair, timely, transparent and effective development and business regulatory framework. The OCP also articulates how coordination through integration and collaboration can collectively foster a positive attitude toward economic development (DOS 2023). The business climate reflects how the community values business as a taxpayer, service provider and job creator. A CitiesSpeak survey found that businesses valued three things above all others in their local government: a licensing system that is simple and makes compliance easy; a tax system that has clear rules and is easy to understand; and training and networking programs that help them get their businesses up and running, comply with the local rules, and meet other professionals in their industries (CitiesSpeak 2014).

- Saanich should strive to be a smart and intelligent city. The smart city concept refers to the use of technology and data-driven solutions to enhance the quality of life, sustainability, and efficiency of urban areas. It involves integrating various digital technologies, such as the Internet of Things (IoT), artificial intelligence (AI), big data analytics, and connectivity infrastructure, to improve the delivery of services, optimize resource utilization, and enable better decision-making. District-owned network assets could be used for the collection and exchange of internal data, then combined with data from other sources such as social media and public archives to inform decision making in areas like transportation, energy, waste management and public safety. It could further efforts to promote sustainable practices by optimizing resource consumption and reducing environmental impact.

The intelligent community model is an approach that goes one step further by engaging local people and organizations in devising and implementing smart solutions to build innovative local economies that both create and attract employers that prosper from the world's digital transformation, and strengthen community through digital inclusion (Intelligent Community Forum 2019). Universities, colleges, technical schools, entrepreneurs and businesses can be partners in carrying out innovation. The public is likewise engaged to help determine how and where the innovation should occur. Saanich should apply the intelligent community model to make local area plans and centre/ corridor development more responsive and capable of delivering positive outcomes and community benefits. Other advantages include new options for public service delivery, citizen engagement and public safety. Real-time monitoring, early warning systems, and efficient emergency response mechanisms via video surveillance, smart street lighting, predictive analytics for crime prevention, and disaster management systems are all possible.

5.1.2 Priority initiatives



A. Quality economic infrastructure

Objective: Municipal infrastructure that is resilient and encourages private sector investment and economic activity in Saanich.

Initiatives:

- **Affordable housing** – bring together the development community, not-for-profit sector, and Province, and support District departments in leveraging resources in a timely manner to assist with implementation of the Saanich Housing Strategy. The Economic Development Office should regularly report on the regulatory and cost stressors that emerge among the development partners through the business retention and expansion (BRE) program. [See Case Study Section 8.1]
- **Make Saanich a 15-minute Community** – promote policy and development tools, including incentives, that support Saanich's transition to a 15-minute community through initiatives such as mixed-use zoning, pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, transit services, and Centre, Village, Hub, and Corridor development. [See Case Study Section 8.2]
- **Transit services** – work with local and regional partners preparing research for increased transit services in support of Centres, Corridors and Villages development. Business cases, demand studies and benefit-cost analysis would help Saanich advocate with BC Transit for expanded services and a potential reinvestigation of rapid transit. Long term, the District should work with BC Transit, the Transit Commission and the CRD on linking Uptown to Downtown Victoria and other urban areas in the region. A proposal to build a light rail line from downtown Victoria, routing along Douglas Street to Uptown then along the Old Island Highway through Colwood to Langford was rejected by the Province in 2011, however as the regional population grows a light rail system may become economically viable in the future.

Quality infrastructure



B. Competitive business climate

Objective: a service-oriented culture and competitive regulatory climate that encourages private sector investment in the community.

Initiatives:

- **Fair regulatory process** – work with and support other departments to create a regulatory climate that is competitive, user-friendly and offers seamless delivery (one-stop-shop concept).
- **Modernized bylaws** – encourage and support the evaluation and modernization of the Zoning Bylaw so it is more responsive to the community's business and development challenges and more accessible document for everyone who needs to use it. Improvements to align with the initiatives and policies outlined in key strategic documents (such as the Housing Strategy, OCP and Strategic Plan) would contribute to a more collaborative business climate and draw more development sector interest. [See Case Study Section 8.3]
- **Digital services** – support the implementation of technology solutions that simplifies, clarifies and accelerates all District processes, including development and licensing processes. Technology can improve timing and productivity without sacrificing control and adherence to municipal service delivery and policy objectives.
- **Tax competitiveness** – undertake regular review and reports on Saanich's tax and cost competitiveness, where it is doing well and where it needs to improve. While municipal taxes and costs are often a small portion of the overall tax and cost burden, they can be magnified during the development process when businesses can compare metrics with neighbouring municipalities. A competitive tax structure and cost component (i.e., DCCs) will be needed to attract the investment capital that Saanich seeks to achieve through Centres, Corridors and Villages planning.
- **Transparent development cost charges** – the District tracks the components of DCCs (i.e., transportation, drainage, sewer, water, park acquisition and development) and periodically provides updates to council. Further the District also maintains a policy around Community Amendment Contributions (CACs). Each are often represented as per unit or square footage cost to the new development. However, with the recent introduction of the provincial housing strategy it is becoming critical to also clearly communicate how these charges are contributing to specific community development. Ideally, these expenditures would demonstrate how Saanich is using revenues to reach strategic goals such as the 15-minute City.
- **Effective incentives** – work with other departments to review and assess the effectiveness of existing District business development incentives and advocate for annulment or updating where the benefit-cost argument is weak. First review the property tax exemption program to determine the extent of uptake and a comparison of foregone District revenue with achievement of targeted development outcomes. Second, investigate best practices from other BC municipalities and consider piloting new incentives in support of centre and corridor development. Third, monitor and access federal and provincial government funding and support programs for rental and non-market housing. Finally, consider targeted application of community contribution agreements for priority investment areas including arts and culture space, sport tourism assets and technology coworking space.
- **Short-term rentals** – advocate for implementation of Action 7.1 E of the Saanich Housing Strategy, specifically regulation of short-term rental accommodations. The Zoning Bylaw does not allow short-term rentals of licensed garden suites otherwise they are not prohibited. Also monitor provincial movements in the short-term rental space—the Government of BC may institute province-wide legislation which would impact and potentially override local bylaws (Kulkarni 2023).
- **Intelligent community** – using the guidance and resources of the Intelligent Community Forum, prepare, in cooperation with key District staff, a plan to position Saanich as an intelligent city. This effort can build on SIPP's Smart South Island Initiative which was undertaken in 2017 to inform and influence guiding principles for the region.



C. New urban value

Objective: economic development services that promote job creation and sustainability in the OCP's Primary Growth Areas and Schools, Knowledge Centres and Institutional Lands.

Initiatives:

- **Targeting investment in the OCP's employment lands** – work with other District staff to clarify economic development services, including investment attraction and partnership potential, in support of primary growth areas, key centres, corridors and knowledge centres. Priority should be given to driving investment, job creation and innovative uses in target sectors in the Uptown Core, University Centre and other knowledge centres.
 - Provide research on best practices and promote investment that meets policy guidance for commercial and industrial zones, with an emphasis on coworking space, live-work space, professional and technical offices, lab space and future flexible industrial space.
 - Support the investigation into metrics associated with population thresholds required to support new services that compliment the 15- minute City concept (Complete Neighbourhoods).
 - Advocate for Community Contributions that provide commercial opportunities as well as resident amenities, for example affordable worker housing and cultural facilities.
 - Advocate for building forms, infrastructure and amenities that would contribute to more innovation clusters. [See Case Study Section 8.4]
- **Industrial lands** – in cooperation with the Planning Department, seek funding for and support an employment land strategy that documents baseline and base case real estate market conditions, inventory of lands suitable for redevelopment and policy guidance for protecting, densifying and encouraging higher and better uses in Saanich's industrial, commercial and retail areas. The Economic Development Office should support the District's real estate function in assembling and bringing to market unique and desired employment lands to support emerging and diversifying sector activities.
- **Hotel offer** – identify parcels suitable for hotel development either in an existing Tourism Accommodation Zone or elsewhere in one of Saanich's centres and undertake preplanning that would support marketing and recruitment efforts. Work with DGV on site identification and outreach to hotel developers for investment in 3-star or boutique properties so business and leisure visitors can overnight in the community. This would create more overnight stays, new pedestrian traffic and trade for businesses and contribute to overall community vibrancy is developed in the Uptown Core or other centre.
- **Sport tourism assets** – working with Parks, Recreation and Community Services, and in cooperation with regional partners, identify opportunities for upgrading, expanding and creating new indoor and outdoor venues that would enhance recreation options for residents while supporting a more robust sport tourism sector. A Recreation Market Analysis was recently prepared and a Lambrick Park Planning project is upcoming. A field demand analysis is also in the works. Further research on economic and financial impacts, target sports, feasibility assessments and fundraising would expand the knowledge base, help with advocacy efforts and identify priority projects.



5.2 Service development

Saanich will develop core economic development services to facilitate business development, bring in new outside investment and support labour market efficiency.

5.2.1 Rationale

- Historically, economic development was associated with the attraction of business, investment and employment from sources outside the community. Today that notion has been turned on its head with a clear focus on fostering growth and diversification from within. Approximately 80 percent of new jobs and capital investment comes from companies that already operate in the community. Moreover, existing companies could threaten the economy if they downsize or leave the community. For these reasons, business retention and expansion (BRE) services based on an understanding of the issues facing businesses and how to respond to their needs is a core economic development function.
- A successful BRE program can also provide data and intelligence to inform the attraction of new investment. The connection between BRE and attraction is based on a deep understanding of local assets and conditions and how these are driving investment activity. Any new investor would be plugging into the regional supply chain so would be evaluating BRE issues to understand the business climate and return on investment potential. Investment promotion and attraction is an integral part of economic development that is most effective when executed cohesively as business retention, expansion and attraction (BRE+A) programming.
- BRE+A activities are meant to create deal flow, that is internal and external investment in business and job creation. For that process to be functional a community must be investment-ready, project a clear value proposition to its audiences and pursue partnerships to amplify a consistent investment narrative. Currently, Saanich labours in the shadow of Victoria as an investment destination—a distinctive economic investment brand building off Sustainable Saanich is needed.
- BRE programming should focus on the growth-oriented sectors identified in Section 4.4 where there is above-average potential for generating positive economic outcomes. Two other sub-targets include large employers and any company engaged in trade and export activities, which are a foundation of the local and regional economic base.
- Several core sectors (agriculture and food, agri-tourism and film) are basic sector activities that are not large employers in the District's economy but they have diversification potential and immediate opportunities for development. Regional partners such as the Victoria Film Commission and CRFAIR can be engaged to launch incremental initiatives that are ready to be delivered today.
- Human capital allows an economy to diversify, notably in areas such as science, education, and management that directly support participation, innovation, productivity and social well-being. The World Bank's 2020 Human Capital Index ranks Canada fifth of 173 nations on its composite measure of health, education and training achievements (World Bank 2023). Saanich can tap into BC's robust human capital ecosystem through partnerships and initiatives to improve labour supply and quality with a focus on high-potential target sectors.
- A knowledge-based economy based on the adoption of technology and innovations is typically rooted in the principles of entrepreneurship. Three primary sources contribute to job creation, start-ups, young entrepreneurial firms ages one to five years, and high impact, established companies. According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), start-ups and young firms are the engine of job creation. Their contribution to job creation outstrips their share of total employment. These numbers mask inherent heterogeneity in the entrepreneurship space because most firms either fail in the first years of activity or remain very small. In OECD countries like Canada, young firms account for about 20% of employment but create almost half of new jobs. The rapid scaling up of a small number of very successful start-ups is therefore one of the main drivers of aggregate employment growth (OECD 2016). Saanich is well on its way to developing the knowledge economy—it has fewer traditional industrial enterprises and fewer ties to the resource economy that supports rural economies across the province. It also has major portions of its economy deriving from sectors like education and healthcare that are inherently knowledge intensive but not known for being entrepreneurial. Entrepreneurship can play a vital role in the ongoing diversification of the regional economy, exploiting disruptive and emerging technologies to create new sources of productive economic capacity, jobs and community wealth.

5.2.2 Priority initiatives



A. Business services

Objective: core economic development services with strong links to business and institutional ecosystems that guides retention and expansion of investment and jobs.

Initiatives:

- **Business retention and expansion** – design and initiate a BRE program in Saanich, with a focus on strategic growth-oriented sectors and reinforcement of the OCP's economic policies.
- **Business facilitation in core sectors** – partner with and support sector organizations and stakeholders in core sectors where there is existing development potential and deliverable projects. Priority should be given to the following:
 - **Agriculture and food** – provide support to the District's Agriculture and Food Security Planner on implementation of the Agriculture and Food Security Plan and Food Hub Feasibility Study on matters related to business and supply chain development, land access for producers and recruitment. Work with CRFAIR in establishing a Regional Food Policy Council and support producers and young agrarians access land and production facilities.
 - **Agri-tourism** – work with Saanich peninsula farms, food and beverage producers, CFAIR and Destination Greater Victoria to expand and promote Flavour Trails as a destination product in Saanich with potential linkages to active travel, sports and nature-based experiences. Continue to work with the 'Saanich Peninsula Tourism Partners' group on developing a tourism strategy for the Peninsula and support projects and initiatives to expand and diversify Agri-Tourism in Saanich.
- **Construction and real estate** – engage the real estate and construction sector to provide the innovative, affordable housing that Saanich requires. A major component of this outreach has already been discussed previously in the business climate section but inviting developers and contractors who share Saanich's housing vision to work with the community is also needed.
- **Film** – work with the Victoria Film Commission to promote Saanich as a film location, provide information on film locations, provide access to civic services, assist companies with obtaining film permits, facilitate engagement with residents and businesses to identify restrictions to filming and work with other departments such as Parks, Recreation and Community Services, Engineering and Saanich Police on location management. The District should also develop policies that strengthen the internal process for film permits and establish pricing for the use of civic assets by the sector that generate a competitive return on investment.

Business services





- **Sport tourism** – continue to work with Destination Greater Victoria and Greater Victoria Sport Tourism Commission on expanding sport assets and events to drive visitation and increase overnight stays that generate a higher spend for local businesses. The enhanced hotel offer discussed previously is needed to benefit from overnight stays, especially if it specializes in sport/event hosting. The Economic Development office can also work with Parks, Recreation and Community Services on future feasibility and business planning for sports venues and facilities. and with other departments on the use of Municipal and Regional District Tax proceeds for tourism development.
- **Business Improvement Areas (BIAs)** – continue to support BIAs that have been established by bylaw in Saanich with focused assistance on initiatives that substantively contribute to the District's Villages and Centres area planning and involve this Strategy's target sectors.
- **Labour market program access** – work with local service providers and industry to access WorkBC Labour Market Partnership Program funding for primary and secondary research on the local labour market, specifically on barriers and opportunities for increasing participation at all education and skill levels. Promote the Canada/BC Provincial Nominee Program to local employers (business, institutions and non-government organization) and NGO partners like TalentLift and Talent Beyond Boundaries, focusing on health care and tech occupations that the Province has prioritized and Saanich has need for.
- **Indigenous partnerships** – support Indigenous economic reconciliation and social equity through partnerships with the individual First Nations, IPC, Victoria Native Friendship Centre and the BC Métis Federation.

B. Place marketing

Objective: awareness of Saanich as a capital region community and inbound investment.

Initiatives:

- **Economic development microsite** – update and expand the functionality of the existing economic development website and enhance its capacity as a communication platform with internal and external audiences. An emphasis should be placed on reinforcing the brand promise, amplifying narrative using stories of local assets and successes, and being a clearing house of data and information that draws in viewers. Integration with the smart city initiative and data strategy recommended earlier in this report would enrich information exchange and empower other data tools such as visualization and geotargeting.
- **News and stories** – generate compelling news and stories on the website to drive social media activity, investment enquiries and networking activity. Develop curated content supported by audio-visual resources to develop stories around target sectors, local technology successes and entrepreneurs.
- **Proof points** – prepare proof points on important economic topics such as housing, employment land and knowledge centres in support of economic development policy and practice. Half-page proof points would describe Saanich's economic development projects and how they are aligned with broader community planning objectives.
- **Positioning to support Sustainable Saanich** – the Sustainable Saanich brand spells out a unique selling proposition and can be used to guide all marketing and promotion efforts of the Economic Development Office. Tag lines, storytelling that reinforces the brand promise and collateral material such as audio-visual resources should be developed that ties together sustainability, lifestyle and the knowledge economy.
- **Investment readiness** – evaluate Saanich's investment readiness against cities it both compares to and competes with that will highlight where and how the community will improve its ability to facilitate and accommodate investment – especially from a regulatory perspective.
- **Investment attraction** – focus investment attraction efforts that support the District's Centres, Corridors and Villages planning and investment in priority sectors by public and private sources of capital. A toolkit for outreach and creating deal flow should be created so the Economic Development Office can engage the real estate sector and investors. This toolkit would include a clear and compelling value proposition (why invest in Saanich?), provision of information such as an up-to-date community profile, collateral materials that can be used in marketing and promotional efforts, customer relationship system, and leveraged partnerships with SIPP, Destination Greater Victoria and economic development offices in the CRD that also engage in attraction activities.



C. Entrepreneurship

Objective: greater startup and commercialization activity in emerging sectors.

Initiatives:

- **Networking and partnerships** – foster a supportive network of entrepreneurs, investors, mentors, and local organizations that can offer guidance, resources, and support for startups and early-stage companies. The focus should be on emerging sectors like cleantech and circular economy where supply chain linkages are weak or undeveloped and where access to resources for startup, commercialization and scale up is challenging. Other potential areas of involvement include liaison with post-secondary faculties engaged in research and development, facilitating access to funding programs, showcasing local success stories, and advocating for a more supportive regulatory framework.
- **Supportive assets** – work with partners such as VIATEC, UVIC, Camosun College, and VILS to expand early-stage incubation and acceleration facilities targeting sub-sectors where there is already local capacity, including biotechnology, medical devices, healthcare services and informatics. A variation of VIATEC's successful Fort Tectoria in one of Saanich's knowledge centres might be viable. Another immediate opportunity is wet lab space that is in critically short supply in BC. Saanich is currently working with VILS on a new wet lab and further additions could be a strategic tool for drawing in more pre-commercial companies from Vancouver Island and the Lower Mainland. Ongoing outreach with the real estate sector on increasing the local supply of life sciences and other technology space in Saanich should be undertaken. [See Case Study Section 8.5]
- **Knowledge transfer** – work closely with post-secondary institutions and the healthcare sector to amplify their potential as local economic engines by building on their core strengths as drivers of the knowledge economy in Saanich and the capital region. Saanich should soften the traditional borders between institutions and community by making the flow of ideas, innovations and creations easier. It should take an active role in promoting knowledge transfer to the private and public sectors not just in applied research but in emerging thought. Innovative programs like CityStudio have great potential in this regard. Saanich could also work with provincial organizations like Foresight Canada, the BC Centre for Innovation and Clean Energy and the Alacrity Foundation to foster the cleantech ecosystem on Vancouver Island. [See Case Study Section 8.6 and 8.7]
- **Innovative financing** – explore innovative financing vehicles and promote access to senior government funding programs to increase access to early-stage capital for growth-oriented technology entrepreneurs and companies. Pre-seed, seed, angel and venture funding models that target technology transfer out of UVic, Camosun and Royal Jubilee Hospital would stimulate development in professional, scientific and technical services and, potentially, manufacturing. The Economic Development Office can also assist local businesses by promoting the different types of financing available, how they can be accessed, and investigating new options that address funding gaps.



6. Implementation

6.1 Plan horizon

The plan horizon for this Strategy is five years, with an action plan of three years.

6.2 Preparing for implementation

The implementation of the Strategy is contingent on three preconditions:

- **Staff time**—staff time should be committed before implementation by quantifying it in all applicable annual work plans.
- **Funding**—many projects will require funding above and beyond the core operations budget. It is not necessary to have all funding raised before proceeding, providing the project can be broken into discreet segments and executed as time and money permits.
- **Partnerships**—as with funding, many projects require collaboration with partners who must be aware of and agree to participate in implementation. Agreement on timing, division of responsibilities (financial and otherwise) and risk management is also required.

Prior to initiating an initiative in this Strategy, it should be itemized in the current annual work plan with enough detail to guide the deployment of resources, decision making and a sequential pathway to implementation. Strategies and action plans are guideways and always subject to tactical response and adaptation to conditions and events as they unfold on the ground.



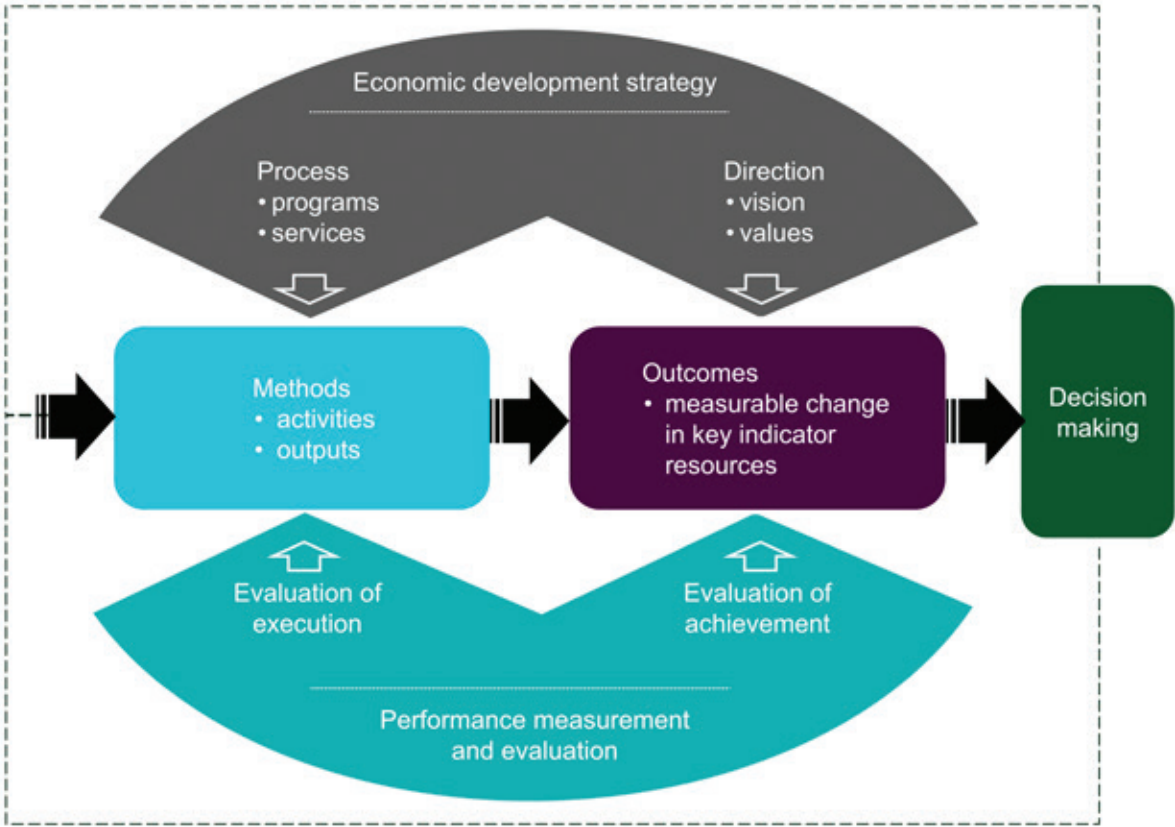
6.3 The Role of the Economic Development Advisory Committee

The Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC) has an important role to play in planning, advice to Council and assistance with the delivery of annual work plans. The purpose of the EDAC is to:

- Advise Saanich Council and staff on economic development and investment related issues and opportunities in the municipality, including:
 - initiatives that support economic sustainability
 - economic development impediments and opportunities
 - business attraction, retention and expansion activities
 - proposed provincial or federal policies that affect the local and regional economy
 - the municipality's participation in region-wide economic development initiatives
 - methods of providing information about business to the public
- Assist in the development and implementation of the Economic Development Strategy, as requested by staff or Council.
- Provide a community perspective on promoting development policies linking land use and economic development while encouraging an aesthetic and safe urban landscape.
- Provide an opportunity for associations and industry and business groups to present information relevant to the Committee mandate through delegations.

6.4 Performance measurement

The purpose of a performance measurement system is to support ongoing strategic, tactical and operational planning, report to key audiences and provide accountability for the resources used in delivering economic development services. The tracking and evaluation process entails specifying metrics and indicators that measure change and preparing an annual report on the progress made in implementing the Strategy, including reporting on the activities, inputs and actual and projected outcomes. Activities and outputs are measures of execution outcomes are a measure of achievement. The process is visualized below.



Key performance indicators are suggested in the table below.

Priority	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes
Quality infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Services implementedPrograms implementedPrograms deliveredPartnerships engaged	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Housing startsNew infrastructureNew transit services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Housing affordabilityCommute timesTravel mode use
Business climate		<ul style="list-style-type: none">New policy toolsTax, incentive revisionsDigitization initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Permitting timesTax rankingsBusiness satisfaction
New urban value		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Development activityInnovative developmentsNew infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">OCP land use targetsBusiness satisfactionCommunity satisfaction
Business development		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Number of businesses visited, assistedDollars investedGrant funding secured	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Job/income impactsJob/population ratioBusiness and tax baseEconomic diversity
Investment attraction		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Website metricsInvestment enquiriesInvestment flowGrant funding secured	<ul style="list-style-type: none">New investmentJob/income impactsBusiness and tax baseEconomic diversity
Entrepreneurship		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Partnerships establishedGrant funding securedProjects created	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Change in sector output, jobs and GDPEmerging sector activity

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7.2 Personal communications

7.2.1 Focus group attendance

- Isaac Beall, Anthem Properties
- Russ Benwell, Red Barn Market
- Sarah Bethune, Irene's Bakery
- V Philip Boname, Urbanics Consultants
- Kevin Chan, S.P. Engineering
- Jo-Anne Clarke, UVIC Continuing Studies
- Dave Cowen, Butchart Gardens
- Cassidy Daskalchuk, District of Saanich
- Tracy Cullen, Victoria Foundation
- Erica Sangster, d'Ambrosio Architecture and Urbanism
- Deborah Donahue, The Gardens at HCP
- John Espley, Connection Skills
- Jerome Etwaroo, Coast Capital Innovation Centre - UVIC
- Greg Gillespie, Gillespie Land Management
- Dale Gann, Royal Roads
- James Gatsi, CL Developers Inc.
- Dallas Gislason, South Island Prosperity Partnership
- Chris Horbachewski, UVIC External Relations
- John Juricic, Harbour Digital Media
- Gregory Howren, Shape Properties
- John Knappet, Knappet Construction
- Rory Kulmala, Vancouver Island Construction Association
- Peter Kuran, UVIC Properties
- David Lang, Camosun College
- Travis Lee, Tri-Eagle Development
- Jack Leung, Royal Bank of Canada
- Luke Mari, ARYZE
- Shellie MacDonald, Haliburton Community Organic Farm
- Calen McNeil, Big Wheel Burger
- Samuel Mercer, Vancouver Island Life Sciences
- Victor Nicolov, Anvy Technologies Inc.
- Reg Nordman, Rocket Builders
- Niall Paltiel, Mike Gerric Construction
- Ryan Patterson, Alitis Investment Counsel Inc.
- Doug Pelton, Priologic
- Tim Petropolous, Fireside Grill
- Kate Phoenix, The Beach House
- Victoria Shannon, Hansbraun Investments Ltd.
- Katie Underwood, Peas and Carrots
- Jennifer Vornbrock, UVIC Community and Government Relations
- Graham Wallace, Destination Greater Victoria
- Len Wansbrough, Elk Lake Inn & Suites

- Keith Wells, Greater Victoria Sport Tourism Commission
- Rob Wickson
- Dr. Stephanie Willerth, StarFish Medical
- Geoff Wilmshurst, Camosun College
- John Wilson, Gray Line Sightseeing Victoria
- Samantha Wilson
- Dr. Alan E. Winter, Winteck Consulting
- Jami Wood, Niche Grocerant

7.2.2 Interviews

- Robert Bettauer, Pacific Institute for Sport Education
- Cassidy Daskalchuk, District of Saanich
- Emilie de Rosenroll, South Island Prosperity Partnership
- Kathleen Gilbert, Victoria Film Commission
- Dallas Gislason, South Island Prosperity Partnership
- Kevin Hall, University of Victoria
- Linda Geggie, Capital Region Food & Agriculture Initiatives Roundtable
- Dan Gunn, Victoria Innovation, Advanced Technology & Entrepreneurship Council
- Lisa Kalinchuk, University of Victoria
- Peter Kuran, University of Victoria
- Paul Nursey, Destination Greater Victoria
- Cam Scott, District of Saanich
- Lane Trotter, Camosun College
- Kathy Whitcher, Urban Development Institute - Capital Region
- Keith Wells, Greater Victoria Sport Tourism Commission
- Geoff Wilmshurst, Camosun College

8. Case studies

8.1 Achieving housing density

Relevance to Saanich: municipal housing tools that have worked in BC

The City of Kelowna and the City of Richmond are recognized by the province as communities with leading housing development strategies. Between 2010 and 2022, Kelowna recorded 18,174 starts while Richmond had 25,290. Meanwhile, in Saanich the number of new units was 4,090. While both Kelowna (153,385) and Richmond (222,950) have larger populations than Saanich's 125,850, both developed a much larger share of housing relative to their population (11.8% new housing to 2022 population in Kelowna, 11.3% in Richmond, versus 3.2% Saanich).

City of Kelowna - Kelowna utilizes [financial incentives](#) to support the development of affordable housing and redevelopment of the City centre and Rutland centre. It has a revitalization tax exemption bylaw for its urban centres and employs strategies that ensure the type and location of housing achieve long-term community objectives. Tools like structured [Development Cost Charges](#) (DCCs) that reflect the larger infrastructure burden of development outside of Kelowna's core incentivizes development within the core. The City has established a rental housing grant program offering up to \$8,000 for three-bedroom rental units to offset DCCs for purpose-built rentals. It also offers eligible property tax relief through the [Revitalization Tax Exemption Bylaw No. 9561](#). The application process for [building legal secondary suites](#) has been greatly simplified. (City of Kelowna 2023)

Finally, Kelowna has worked hard at implementing its Healthy Housing Strategy that was led by the City and Interior Health and other community partners. This initiative focuses on protecting rental housing, improving housing affordability, reducing barriers to affordable housing, building the right supply and strengthening partnerships (City of Kelowna 2018).

City of Richmond – Richmond created an [Affordable Housing Strategy](#) that focuses on subsidized rental housing, low-end market rentals and entry-level home ownership. The strategy was based on issues raised during the community engagement process leading to five strategic directions:

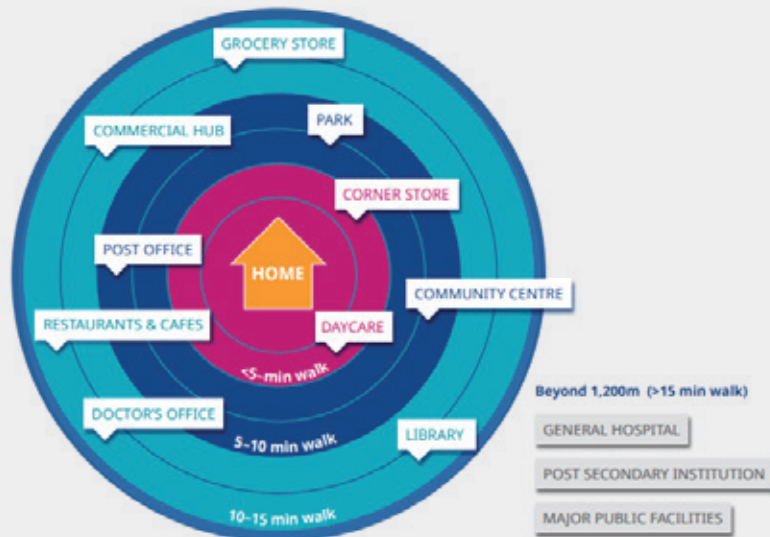
- Using the City's regulatory tools to encourage a diverse mix of housing types;
- Maximizing use of City resources and financial tools;
- Building capacity with non-profit housing and service providers;
- Facilitating and strengthen partnership opportunities; and,
- Increasing advocacy, awareness and education roles. (City of Richmond 2018)



8.2 Complete communities

Relevance to Saanich: economic measures that complement the 15-Minute City concept

Complete communities provide a diversity of housing, and a range of employment opportunities, amenities, and services within a 15–20-minute walk. The 15-minute city (FMC) is based on flexible housing and transportation options, walkability, efficient services and infrastructure, environmental sustainability, and preservation of the natural environment (B.C. Ministry of Housing 2023).



Melbourne, Australia is considered an FMC best practice. [Plan Melbourne](#) is the State of Victoria Government's long-term planning strategy, guiding the way Melbourne will grow and change to 2050. Plan Melbourne is guided by the principle of FMC neighbourhoods. Research shows this is the maximum time people are willing to walk to meet their daily needs for local health facilities and services, schools, groceries and personal services. To establish the features of a FMC neighbourhood as policy, the state government developed criteria to demonstrate "hallmarks":

- Safe, accessible and well connected for pedestrians and cyclists to optimize active transportation;
- High-quality public realm and open spaces;
- Provide services and destinations that support local living;
- Facilitate access to quality public transport that connects people to jobs and higher order services;
- Deliver housing/population at densities that make local services and transport viable; and
- Facilitate thriving local economies.

A pilot program was launched to test principles in selected neighbourhoods based on 800 m catchment areas, which represents an FMC walking distance. (BC Ministry of Housing 2023)

8.3 North Vancouver's form-based Zoning Bylaw

Relevance to Saanich: Tools implemented by other BC municipalities with similar growth, densification and housing challenges.

The City of North Vancouver launched a two-year project to update its Zoning Bylaw in early 2023 to make it easier for users who need to work with the bylaw when making decisions about property and land use. The project is anticipated to complete at the end of 2024. City staff noted in a report to Council that modernization of the current Zoning Bylaw was needed to make it more responsive to changing community needs, increase clarity and usability, and support Council's vision to become the "healthiest small city in the world."

The modernized bylaw is modelled on a form-based approach, which is design-focused with increased attention on building form and how it shapes the public realm. A form-based approach is considered a best practice compared to conventional zoning bylaws for regulating land development and achieving policy goals.

The update is expected to generate better outcomes meeting the challenges balancing housing need, density, employment creation and healthy lifestyles. This would be accomplished through the following:

- provide for more flexibility and creativity in enabling innovative and adaptable responses to emerging and future opportunities;
- support other important considerations such as universal design, equity and sustainability;
- streamline the development and permitting process with simpler content navigation; and
- reduce reliance on text-based technical jargon by emphasizing visual outcomes backed by drawings, diagrams, user-friendly print and interactive online formats, and more accessible language.

The pilot will allow the City to engage with impacted groups and the wider community, as well as analyzing technical and best practices to propose a draft bylaw. (City of North Vancouver 2023)

8.4 Brewery district, New Westminster

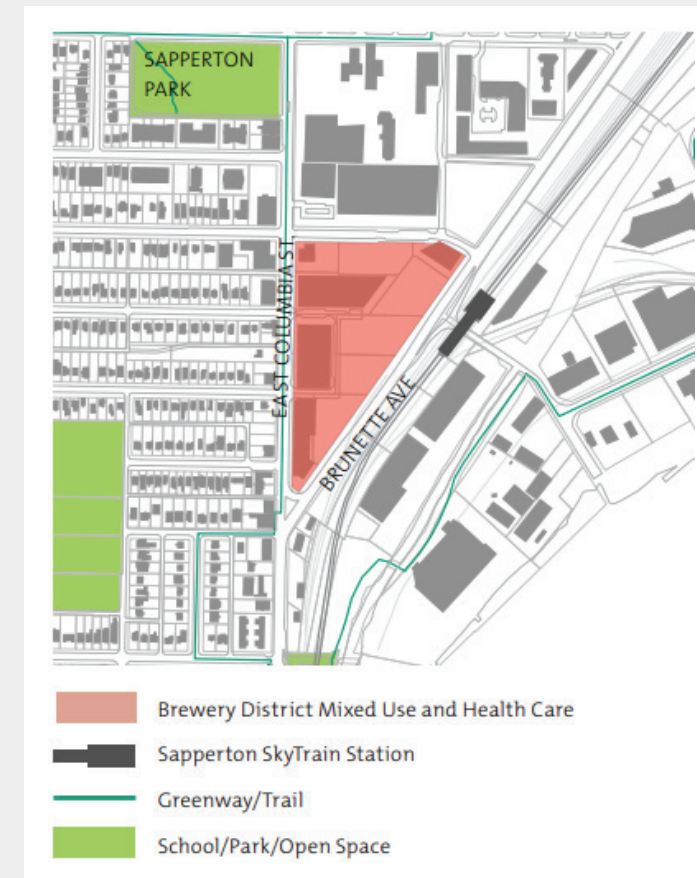
Relevance to Saanich: a BC example of how an existing developed area was converted to a mixed-use precinct with major employment, residential and transit components

The Brewery District Mixed Use Neighbourhood is one of three Development Permit Areas in New Westminster with Victoria Hill and Sapperton Green being the other two. These three Mixed Use Nodes have been designed to create neighbourhood connections, establish well defined streets, design appropriately scaled buildings, establish attractive building frontages, integrate sustainable strategies, enhance the public realm and promote safety and security (City of New Westminster 2023).

The Brewery District was the original location for BC's oldest brewery (est. 1879) however, operations ceased at the site in 2005. Beginning in 2007, planning began on site redevelopment. Today, the Brewery District Mixed Use Neighbourhood is a nine-acre, master-planned, transit-oriented community. The site is strategically located across from the Sapperton SkyTrain station and directly across from Royal Columbian Hospital. The site offers 1.4 million square feet of buildable area within the project's eight planned buildings (of which three have been completed) (Marcus and Millchap 2023).

The area takes advantage of the decommissioning of the Labatt Brewery site to develop a vibrant, pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use community that integrates with the surrounding

neighbourhood (WesGroup 2007). Further, the Brewer District is designated to facilitate orderly and sequential development of commercial, health care services, and multi-family residential development adjacent to the Sapperton SkyTrain Station.



8.5 Wet lab shortages in Vancouver

Relevance to Saanich: lessons learned from the Lower Mainland on overcoming the lack of economic infrastructure for high growth sectors

In 2021, Life Sciences BC and the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade co-published a study of the life sciences sector in BC, its economic potential and opportunities to address system barriers and accelerate the growth and competitiveness of the sector (Life Sciences BC 2021). One of the highlights of the report was the need for turnkey wet lab space that allows early-stage companies to develop their work programs and attract the investment needed to scale up to commercialization. This issue is particularly acute in Vancouver, where many early life sciences companies are having to put their research and development on hold until new laboratory spaces get built. The dilemma for smaller companies is research and data are required to attract financing, but the in-house facilities required to undertake that research is not affordable. Wet labs featuring higher ceilings, strong floor load capabilities, backup power generator capacity, efficient riser locations for ducting, flexible loading dock and wider pathways are a critical component of the sector's development pathway. This specialized industry need requires dedicated infrastructure.

Vancouver is home to leading biotechnology companies like Stemcell Technologies and AbCellera Biologics Inc. that have the financial wherewithal to furnish their own wet lab space.

Nevertheless, there are hundreds of startups without access to that level of funding. Some access to lab space is available from the life sciences accelerator adMare BioInnovations, located at UBC but demand is high and many companies are not able to access the resources adMare provides. The B.C. Life Sciences and Biomanufacturing Strategy has invested \$10 million in a new wet lab facility to be led by adMare. Other partners will invest another \$13 million to support 20 startups with roughly 30,000 square feet of turnkey wet lab space. Rather than a developing a purpose-built space, adMare will lease lab and office space in the neighbourhood of Broadway-Mount Pleasant. Private developers are also responding to surging demand by constructing buildings suitable for wet lab use. Low Tide Properties has several properties in the neighbourhood that combine office, lab, and retail space as a hub for creative, tech, and biotech companies. In total the company offers four buildings and 300,000 square feet of wet lab space, that is 100 per cent leased. (Wilson 2023)

8.6 CityStudio

Relevance to Saanich: a made in BC innovation to breaking down traditional barriers between universities and neighbouring communities

CityStudio was started in Vancouver in 2011 and the unique model has been rolled out globally in 15 cities (12 in Canada, 2 in Australia, 1 in Norway). In late 2022, CityStudio South Island was formed between Royal Roads University and the cities of Langford and Colwood as the 11th CityStudio to launch in Canada and 5th in British Columbia.

CityStudio Vancouver, co-founded by Dr. Janet Moore and Duane Elverum, provides students with direct opportunities to work in and with the city on urban challenges. It started with the City of Vancouver and Simon Fraser University to engage students in the hands-on work in support of the Greenest City Action Plan, but has since expanded to include UBC, BCIT and Langara College. It serves as an innovation hub where municipal staff, students and community co-create experimental projects to make cities more livable and sustainable. They facilitate and match collaborations and enable transformational learning and applied projects between civic and academic partners that lead to deeper understanding of complex urban issues. HUBBUB is a unique interactive showcase held each semester in December and April when students share innovative ideas, energy and

creativity for city-building with City staff. The objective is to inspire a new insight or solution to a current challenge in the city's work environment, to network and to strengthen a sense of civic agency.

Projects are diverse, ranging from rental apps, disaster recovery planning and city conduit management to online training platforms and bioretention design guidelines. Some highlights for Vancouver's 2021-22 operating year include:

45 course collaborations, where 1,490 students co-created innovative paths with 53 faculty and 63 City staff.
94% of the participants reported the experience useful for their career or work, while 88% felt inspired by new possibilities, and 81% felt more connected to the city.
The ways in which these connections are happening are more adaptable and responsive to increase reach and impact. (CityStudio 2022)

8.7 Cleantech in Prince George

Relevance to Saanich: guiding cleantech to take advantage of regional assets, capabilities and challenges

Prince George has access to the largest amount of harvestable wood biomass in Canada. In partnership with the University of Northern BC and Community Futures Fraser Fort George, the City's Economic Development team branded the region as a cleantech centre and prepared a strategy specifically in innovations and uses for biomass. Outreach and engagement with cleantech firms was based on utilizing local competitive advantages including UNBC's gasification plant and Wood Innovation Lab, the Downtown District Energy System the BC Biocarbon plant and their export-ready transportation corridor via rail, airports and major highways.

The strategy identified gaps hindering investment in the cleantech ecosystem area and opportunities for helping new and existing businesses. A roundtable session was hosted in 2018 to gather input from 12 firms on economic development practices and workforce retention in the city. Talent recruitment, access to development, and market intelligence and access emerged as critical areas of need. Work began to address workforce development and commercialization of new cleantech products and services. They developed strategies to improve their financial capacity, so they could pursue technology development and commercialization, and as a result, help clean tech firms expand, modernize and export. They began marketing local clean tech products and

services through trade shows, targeted marketing campaigns, workshop hosting and outreach to cleantech networks. A workforce study to establish baseline data to accurately measure the impact of their various efforts and continue to evaluate over time was undertaken.

Prince George's Clean Tech Cluster approach has generated \$1.5 million in additional business activity in the city. Reports from firms also show increased sales and business collaborations in the community. The workshops conducted locally have built strong relationships, and as such, partnerships between firms are beginning to emerge. (GOBC 2023)

