

BLENKINSOP LOCAL AREA PLAN



THE CORPORATION OF THE
DISTRICT OF SAANICH
BRITISH COLUMBIA

BLENKINSOP LOCAL AREA PLAN

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Prepared by the Planning Department
The Corporation of the District of Saanich

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Background

The Saanich Official Community Plan comprises the General Plan 1993, twelve local area plans, action plans and the Development Permit Areas – Justification and Guidelines. The General Plan provides a policy framework from a municipal perspective while the local area plans provide more detailed policies at the neighbourhood level. The documents are reviewed periodically in order that they remain contemporary and relevant.

The first Blenkinsop Local Area Plan was adopted in April, 1981. The Planning Department initiated a major review and a new plan was adopted by Council in 1990. Since then, some amendments have occurred in response to specific development proposals, but the basic policies of the plan have not changed. Also, in June 2001, Council endorsed the Braefoot Action Plan. While Braefoot is located just outside of Blenkinsop, in the Gordon Head local area, the plan contains policies and development guidelines respecting the natural environment, streetscape, stormwater, and other issues that may be of interest to Blenkinsop residents.

On November 20, 1995 Council endorsed a program to update all local area plans, including a public participation process, centred on tapping into local knowledge and interests of residents and local community associations. The program recognizes that, while the basic land use policies are generally relevant, changes are required to update statistics and maps and to acknowledge a new awareness of environmental and social issues. Should major complex issues arise through the review process, they will be identified in the local area plan and referred for more detailed consideration and recommendation through the Action Plan process or a special study.

Public Participation

The revision of the Blenkinsop Local Area Plan included public participation throughout the planning process. It began with a survey in November of 1998, distributed to all households (see Appendix 1). This was followed by a public meeting that was held April 7, 1999 and attended by over 50 residents. An open house to present the draft plan was held February 20, 2002. In addition, there were informal meetings and kitchen table discussions with agricultural producers, business people, historians, and other interested residents.

Location And Characteristics

The Blenkinsop Valley is, primarily, a rural residential and agricultural area located mostly outside the urban containment boundary. It is generally defined by Cordova Bay Road and Royal Oak Drive on the north, Boradmead residential area on the west, Mt. Douglas on the east and McKenzie Avenue on the south. It is bisected from north to south by Blenkinsop Road. Topography varies from the steep slopes of Mt. Douglas to the large floodplain surrounding Blenkinsop Lake. Land uses include commercial agriculture, hobby farms, outdoor recreation, and rural residential properties. With the exception of Mt. Douglas Park to the east, the valley is surrounded by urban residential development. Relatively large parcel sizes and easy access from the urban area of Saanich make the valley an attractive location for a variety of non-agricultural uses which have the potential to threaten agriculture.

**MAP 1.1
LAP BOUNDARY**

The Blenkinsop Survey (1998) results indicate that the valley is valued by its residents for its protected agricultural lands, serenity and quiet, wildlife and natural habitat, open space, parks and trails, farm stands, ponds, lakes, marshes, and proximity to urban amenities (see Appendix 1).

Statistics Canada indicates a population in Blenkinsop of 1,215 people as of June, 1996; an increase of 460 people from the 1986 census.

Community Organization

In many areas of Saanich, residents have formed community associations. These groups or associations monitor proposed changes in zoning and land use, provide a liaison role with Council and staff, and represent the neighbourhood interest on issues affecting the neighbourhood. The Saanich Community Associations Network (SCAN) is composed of representatives from twenty-one community organizations.

There is no active residents' association representing the entire valley. Residents in the southeast corner are represented by the Braefoot Allison Ratepayers Association. Also, community associations from the adjacent local areas and the Friends of Mt. Douglas Park have shown a special interest in the Blenkinsop Valley and Mt. Douglas Park.

Social Profile

The following tables provide a social profile for Blenkinsop and a comparison with Saanich as a whole.

**TABLE 1.1
HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS**

	Blenkinsop	Saanich
Total private households	400	39,695
Average household size	3.0	2.5
Average household income	\$75,224	\$56,841

Source: Statistics Canada, 1996 Municipal Profile

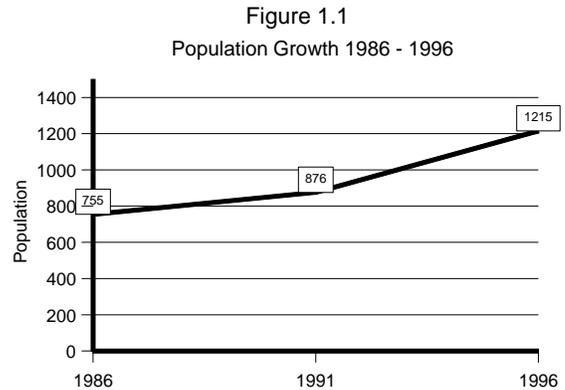


TABLE 1.2
PERCENT OF POPULATION BY AGE GROUP
 (Note: Due to rounding, percentages may not add up to 100%)

AGE	BLENKINSOP		SAANICH
	1986	1996	1996
0-4	8.7	4.9	5.1
5-9	8.0	6.2	5.8
10-14	6.7	6.2	6.4
15-19	7.3	9.5	6.4
20-24	6.7	6.2	6.9
25-34	16.0	10.7	13.5
35-44	16.0	17.3	16.2
45-54	10.0	15.6	13.8
55-64	12.0	8.2	9.1
65-74	8.0	8.6	9.3
75+	2.7	4.5	7.4
Dominant age group	25-44	35-44	35-44

Source: Statistics Canada Municipal Profile

TABLE 1.3
EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY, 1996

	BLENKINSOP	SAANICH
Agriculture	7.1 %	1.1 %
Manufacturing	5.7 %	4.7 %
Construction	5.7 %	6.2 %
Transportation/Communication	3.5 %	5.1 %
Wholesale and retail	9.2 %	15.8 %
Finance, insurance, real estate	4.2 %	5.4 %
Business services	14.9 %	6.4 %
Government, education, health	31.3 %	37.3 %
Tourist accommodation	9.9 %	9.1 %
Other	8.5 %	8.2 %

Source: Statistics Canada 1996 Municipal Profile

2.0 COMMUNITY VISION, 2010

Some Blenkinsop residents who participated in the local area plan review process volunteered to prepare a vision statement as a basis for the policy direction of the local area plan. The following is their vision:

A Rural Space in an Urban Place

The Blenkinsop Valley is a cherished rural and natural community in the Municipality of Saanich.

The residents' commitment to the valley is evident in their continuing use of the land for farming and for other rural activities, and in their desire to preserve the remaining natural environment.

The Municipality of Saanich actively supports the rural nature of the valley. Saanich works in partnership with other jurisdictions and authorities to ensure that residents of Greater Victoria and visitors to the Region enjoy the benefits of a rural space in an urban place.

Visitors, and those who pass through, understand the unique character of the valley. They accept their responsibility to behave in a manner that shows respect for farm activities, livestock and the wild plants and animals that share the valley's fields, trails and roadways.

3.0 HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND RESOURCES

In 1858 the Victoria District Office issued maps that labelled what we know as Blenkinsop Lake as Lost Lake. One story suggests that Lost Lake was named by a British Navel officer who lost his way during a paper chase. At some point, in the early 1900's, the name Blenkinsop was substituted for Lost Lake. The maps also show a line dividing the lake into halves, the western property, 50 hectares owned by Henry Von Allman and the eastern property, 105 hectares owned by George Blenkinsop. George Blenkinsop (1822-1904), a native of Cornwall in England, was Hudson's Bay factor at Fort Vancouver, Fort Stikine, Fort Rupert, and Fort Colville. In 1881 he was appointed Indian Agent for West Vancouver Island. The farm residence was located on the east side of Blenkinsop Road, not far from the foot of Mt. Douglas. There is no record, however, that he actually lived on the property.

The lake itself is approximately seven kilometres from downtown Victoria via the Galloping Goose and Lochside Regional Trails. It is 25 metres above sea level and covers an area of approximately three hectares depending on seasonal water levels. Although, the water level is relatively shallow, a soft peaty bottom extends 30 metres deep at the site of the old railway trestle. The lake in fact is a catch basin, complete drainage being prevented by a rim of volcanic rock to the south end.

An easy access to Blenkinsop Lake is from Lochside Drive, formerly, the Canadian Northern Pacific Railway (C.N.P.R.). The C.N.P.R. was constructed during the First World War and serviced passengers and freight from Victoria to Patricia Bay. The route chosen for the C.N.P.R. was a route originally surveyed in 1892 for the Victoria and Sidney Railway (V & S). Although this route was ideal from an operating standpoint, due to its level grade, the V & S rejected it as it missed most of the settled areas such as Saanichton, Keatings and Royal Oak. The Gas Electric Locomotive No. 500 began daily return trips on April 30, 1917 for five cents a mile for a return ticket. Not long after its completion, C.N.P.R. went into bankruptcy, yet service continued as part of the Canadian National Railway (C.N.R.). Its best years were from 1917 to 1920 when automobiles were considered a luxury. In the early 1920's, the passenger service ended, although, the line remained active for shipping freight to and from the Patricia Bay steamships. By 1935, the track north of McKenzie Avenue to Patricia Bay was abandoned leaving only a short spur line from the Trans Canada Highway to Quadra Street, which remained active until 1987.

The rail line was constructed across Blenkinsop Lake on a wooden trestle. In a Daily Colonist article (February 1, 1976) Ron Burnham recalls, *"Blenkinsop's Lake Trestle, probably the most interesting of all Saanich's trestles, has taken a long time to make its exit. When I first noticed it, probably about 1950, when it had been abandoned for 15 years, quite a bit of the bridge still remained. It was quite intriguing, because it looked like a big wharf, complete with pilings, standing in the middle of a small lake. Gradually it has fallen down, or has been dismantled. Probably the former, because a half dozen rows of pilings still stand like cricket wickets."*

In 1954, a young ambitious pilot decided he wanted to land a float plane on the lake. This required removing the pilings of the old trestle. Many stories exist about what happened to the trestle, but one story suggests that on two cold days in December, with permission from the Railway, a crew of four daring men set up charges on the trestle to blow up the pilings. The blasts cut the pilings clean. That float plane never landed on the lake.

Farming has been the primary function of the Blenkinsop Valley since 1906 when the valley “officially opened” and land was on the market. William Mercer bought a total of 81 hectares of that land for his small, but growing dairy business. In the fertile valley with its huge trees, Mercer had only two hectares of his property cleared in 1906. Later when the railway crews arrived to construct the bridge, all the timber to build the trestle came from the Mercer farm.

Neighbours of the Mercers included Joe Nicholson, Rutland Glendenning and the McMorrans. Ed Lohbrunner purchased land from the Mercer family and the access to the property was named Lohbrunner Road.

Telephone service was provided to the Blenkinsop Valley about 1925 followed by electricity in 1927. A waterline was installed in 1931.

Saanich Heritage Structures – An Inventory, adopted by Council as a community heritage register, identifies the former Mercer residence at 4366 Blenkinsop Road as a protected heritage structure. Exterior changes to protected heritage structures require a Heritage Alteration Permit issued by Council.

Credits:	Geoffrey Castle, Municipality of Saanich Archives	Karen Borden, Saanich Resident
	Darryl Muralt, BC Historical Railway Society	BC Provincial Archives
	George A. Hardy, BC Provincial Museum	
	Ron Burnham, Daily Colonist - 1976	

4.0 URBAN CONTAINMENT BOUNDARY

The Urban Containment Boundary is a map boundary which generally encompasses the seweraged area of the municipality and the area planned to be seweraged. With the exception of a narrow strip along the south side of Royal Oak Drive and Cordova Bay Road and the Pheasantwood Terrace, Donwood Drive, and Faithwood Road subdivision along the west boundary, the Blenkinsop local area remains outside of the Urban Containment Boundary. The *Blenkinsop Local Area Plan 1989* permits consideration of minor amendments to the Urban Containment Boundary south of Royal Oak Drive and along the west boundary with Royal Oak only if the land can be serviced by gravity west toward Broadmead or north to Royal Oak Drive without replacing or deepening the existing sewer. Fine-tuning of the Urban Containment Boundary since 1989 has generally defined the extent of this area that can be serviced by gravity. Further minor adjustments would have the potential to impact on the Lochside Trail and/or the rural character of the valley and should not be supported.

In 1992, Council extended the Sewer Service Boundary beyond the Urban Containment Boundary in the Braefoot Road / Allison Road area to resolve a specific health problem caused by malfunctioning septic systems. Also, in 2001, Council agreed to extend the Sewer Service Boundary to resolve a health concern in the Pearce Crescent area. In May 2002, it was extended again to include several existing houses on the east side of Blenkinsop Road north of Miramar Drive. These actions were not intended to provide potential for subdivision into urban size lots. The areas will remain outside the Urban Containment Boundary and the 2 hectare subdivision minimum will be retained.

The area south of Cordova Bay Road on the slopes of Mt. Douglas is partly within Blenkinsop and partly within the Cordova Bay local area. The Urban Containment Boundary in this area is located 60 m south of Cordova Bay Road. In November, 2002, the Sewer Service Boundary was extended to include properties in the Urban Containment Boundary.

With a diminished supply of serviced land for new development within the Urban Containment Boundary there is pressure to consider expansion of the boundary to include lands outside the park, on the north slope of Mt. Douglas. Geographically, this area relates more to Cordova Bay than the Blenkinsop Valley. Theoretically, it can be serviced by gravity to the Cordova Bay sewer system although no capacity allowance was made to service the area.

The *Saanich General Plan 1993* contains policies to preclude major expansion of the Urban Containment Boundary without first obtaining the assent of the electors. Expansion of the Urban Containment Boundary to include the north slopes would constitute a major change and could not be supported within the context of the current *General Plan* policies.

POLICIES

4.1 Do not support further amendments to the Urban Containment Boundary in Blenkinsop.

MAP 4.1
URBAN CONTAINMENT
BOUNDARY 2002

5.0 AGRICULTURE

Agriculture continues to be an important land use in the Blenkinsop Valley. It is supported by A-1 zoning which provides primarily for agriculture and rural residential uses. The minimum parcel area for subdivision in the A-1 zone is 2 hectares. Part of the valley is within the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) and/or assessed as farm for property taxation purposes. Policies in the *Saanich General Plan 1993* support agricultural activity by restricting the exclusion of agricultural land in Blenkinsop from the ALR and fragmentation of this land through subdivision. It should be noted that the approval of the Agricultural Land Commission is required for land located within the Agricultural Land Reserve. The Commission is obliged to consider subdivision applications on their merits in terms of its mandate to preserve agricultural land and encourage farming.

While parts of Blenkinsop are rocky, forested and steeply sloping, the land within the Agricultural Land Reserve is generally composed of good quality soils capable of supporting soil-based agriculture. Exclusion of land in the Blenkinsop Valley from the ALR is not supported. Commercial agricultural producers, however, occupy a relatively small proportion of the land within the valley. Many of the parcels are used as hobby farms. To increase the economic viability of the agricultural sector, activities such as farm marketing and nursery sales are supported by the Land Reserve Commission. There are three parcels zoned for farm markets (A-3) where produce and nursery products are retailed; two are within the ALR. Other commercial uses within the ALR include a golf course and golf driving range. The Land Reserve Commission has made changes to the Agricultural Land Reserve Act to expand the range of value-added farm activities that may be permitted. These activities include agri-tourism activities such as bed and breakfast and other guest accommodation, and seasonal activities such as corn mazes, pumpkin patches, and Octoberfests. The activities help to supplement farm income and to increase public awareness of farm-related issues and benefits.

The valley is isolated from other farming areas in Saanich. Mt. Douglas Park to the east provides a buffer between suburban residential and agricultural uses. Over the years, however, suburban residential development has encroached, particularly to the west. This has created a distinct rural-urban edge that has both benefits and conflicts. The benefits include enjoyment of green space and quiet, rural character that is easily accessible to urban dwellers. The potential conflicts include vandalism, theft, trespass, and general lack of respect for, and knowledge of farming and farming activities. For example, Lochside trail users often park vehicles which block access to farmers' fields on Lohbrunner Road.

Under current zoning regulations, and the Saanich Animals Bylaw, any farm use is allowed on any parcel in an "A" zone with an area greater than 0.2 hectares. This includes feed lots, swine operations and hydroponic greenhouses. Although Right-to-Farm legislation protects agricultural producers from nuisance complaints, farmers acknowledge that they must take extra measures in order to reduce the impact of farming on surrounding neighbours. In addition to the pressures of trying to maintain a profitable operation in a difficult world market, farmers are also challenged with protecting land and machinery from vandalism, controlling trespassing and protecting the public from the dangers of an active working farm including pesticide applications and operating machinery.

MAP 5.1
AGRICULTURE

Farm operators state that business in the Blenkinsop Valley is becoming more difficult every year. Residents who value the farmland for its scenic and open space function may be opposed to intensive farming operations if they generate excessive noise, dust, odours and/or night-light.

Direct farm marketing is part of the agricultural activities of the valley. Besides the three parcels zoned for farm market use, farmers are also permitted to sell agricultural produce grown on-site from farm stands on any “A” zoned lot. The selling of produce grown off-site, however, needs to be more closely monitored. Left unchecked, the sale of imported produce could result in more commercial retail type operations. A proliferation of these businesses could detract from the rural character of the valley. This issue is addressed in more detail in Chapter 8 – Commercial.

An affordable and reliable supply of water is essential to the farming sector. A number of producers hold water licences to Blenkinsop Lake for irrigation purposes. The water level is controlled by a weir. The weir is operated in a cooperative manner in conjunction with the municipality in order to provide winter storage, to drain off water in the spring for agriculture, and to hold water in the summer for irrigation. The lake does not provide sufficient water for agricultural purposes while balancing environmental and aesthetic interests. Municipal water is available in the valley at an agricultural rate which is required to support the agricultural industry.

POLICY

- 5.1 Do not forward applications to the Land Reserve Commission to exclude land from the Agricultural Land Reserve.
- 5.2 Refer to *General Plan 1993*, policy 5.3, when considering applications to subdivide within the Agricultural Land Reserve.
- 5.3 Do not support Agricultural Land Reserve applications or rezoning to permit new non-agricultural uses such as golf courses and/or institutional uses that generate significant traffic.
- 5.4 Undertake a process to develop appropriate regulations and guidelines for agri-tourism activities in consultation with peninsula municipalities and other stakeholders (see policy 8.2).
- 5.5 Continue to regulate the retailing of agricultural products that are not grown on-site.
- 5.6 Consider amending the *Official Community Plan Appendix N – Development Permit Area Justification and Guidelines* to designate a new Development Permit Area for the protection of farming.
- 5.7 Support improvements to water service where necessary to ensure a viable water supply to agricultural operations.

- 5.8 a) Support managed irrigation from Blenkinsop Lake to balance agricultural, environmental and aesthetic interests.
- 5.8 b) Undertake a process to reduce water licences on Blenkinsop Lake having regard for the potential impact on agriculture.
- 5.9 Plant hedgerows or install appropriate fencing within trail rights-of-way to address concerns about public access to adjacent agricultural land and monitor their effectiveness.
- 5.10 Continue to support education programs to increase public understanding of the scarcity of agricultural land, the long term impacts of the loss of food production, the importance of the soil and climate for agriculture, and the hazards associated with farming.
- 5.11 Support efforts to improve the relationship and understanding between the various users and interest groups in the Blenkinsop Valley about the need to co-exist.
- 5.12 Work with farmers and other land owners to encourage best farm practices, reduce the use of pesticides and other chemicals that have the potential to harm the environment, buffer, restore, and protect watercourses and maintain and enhance other significant habitat on agricultural parcels, while maintaining the economic value of the agricultural resource and respecting the farmers' right-to-farm.

6.0 ENVIRONMENT

While the Blenkinsop Valley is known for its agricultural lands, there are also several important natural areas and corridors. Vital areas of forest and rocky outcrops remain, particularly around the edges of the valley. Much of the valley bottom around Blenkinsop Lake is within a floodplain plain. Treed areas, dominated by Garry oak, arbutus and Douglas fir, are connected by creeks, wetlands, natural hedgerows and farmlands. Trees and natural hedgerows within the Lochside Trail corridor offer shade and visual interest for trail users and provide important habitat for native plants and wildlife. Blenkinsop Lake and Mt. Douglas Park, which extends into the valley, are key areas of vital habitat and wildlife corridors.

Wildlife corridors are safe avenues between better quality habitat along which animals can travel, plants can propagate and genetic interchange can occur.

Terrestrial and Westland Habitat

The mosaic of natural and agricultural lands provides a variety of habitat for birds and other wildlife and connections to other natural areas outside of the valley. Individual large trees and isolated shrub areas are also very important for wildlife, particularly if they link larger green spaces. With the exception of Blenkinsop Lake and the natural hedgerows extending to the north and south of the lake, animal life in the valley has not been extensively documented. The area is known to provide outstanding bird and butterfly habitat and is an important stopover for migratory birds. Purple Martins, Black-headed Grosbeak and Green Herons are among the rare breeders using this area for habitat. Deer and small mammals are known to live and breed in the valley.

Blenkinsop Lake, and the surrounding area, is also known for its unusual riparian and natural hedgerow vegetation. Generally, the riparian area remains intact and includes a large variety of riparian shrubs, some growing as large as trees. Associations such as red alder and false lily-of-the-valley can also be found. A stand of trembling aspen near the lakeshore is of a variety found only on Vancouver Island, within British Columbia. The ecological importance of the Blenkinsop Lake area was underlined in a municipal flora and fauna study to assist in the design of the Lochside Trail trestle bridge.

Riparian Areas are located beside creeks, lakes and wetlands. They are distinguished by their vegetation which reflects soil moisture, slope, microclimate, and other factors. They are a transition area between the watercourse and the upland and have a direct influence on the health of the aquatic environment. Riparian areas are noted for their high biodiversity – the variety and combinations of plants and animals – considered highly vulnerable to alteration.

Map 6.1 identifies areas of significant native vegetation identified in Saanich's Environmentally Significant Atlas (1999) and other forested areas identified from air photos. They include Douglas fir forest and rock outcrops dominated by arbutus and Garry oak that extend from Mt. Douglas Park, as well as riparian areas. As many of the plant communities within these areas are limited in geographic range or are sensitive to disturbance, protection and enhancement is particularly important. The control of invasive plant species such as broom, daphne and English ivy is one activity that will help to protect areas of significant vegetation from degradation. Both Saanich, through the Garry Oak Restoration Project, and the Friends of Mt. Douglas Park Society have been actively removing invasive species from the slopes of Mt. Douglas.

MAP 6.1
ENVIRONMENTALLY
SIGNIFICANT AREAS

Aquatic Environment

The Saanich Environmentally Significant Areas atlas and database identifies six creeks in the valley: Beckwith Creek, Grosbeak Creek, Lochside Creek, Cumberland Brook, Blenkinsop Creek, and Big Barn Creek (refer to Map 6.1). In addition to the wetland around Blenkinsop Lake, there is a small wetland south of Donwood Drive that drains into Lochside Creek and numerous ponds. The streams, lakes and wetlands in the valley flow into Colquitz River via Blenkinsop Creek and Swan Creek.

The *Watercourse Bylaw* restricts fouling, obstructing or impeding the flow in watercourses in order to maintain the quality of water and the rate of flow. This bylaw requires that in-line oil and grease interceptors must be installed where a paved or impervious parking lot is constructed in any development except single family dwellings and two-family dwellings. The purpose is to intercept the stormwater run-off from the parking lot before it reaches the municipal drainage system. The owners of the land are required to repair and maintain the device in good working condition. The Engineering Services Specifications of the *Subdivision Bylaw* also contain requirements to regulate stormwater runoff from new development. Salmon bearing streams are also provided some protection under the *Federal Fisheries Act* and the *Provincial Water Act*. The *Local Government Act* provides Council the authority to establish a Development Permit Area for the protection of natural watercourses and fisheries by controlling erosion, and protecting banks and streamside vegetation (riparian zone). Separate from the local area plan review, consideration is being given to establishing a municipal-wide development permit area for these features along with revisions to the *Watercourse Bylaw*. In 2000, Council amended all existing development permit areas to include new guidelines to address riparian areas and impervious cover for new development. In addition, on-going education by all levels of government is required to help residents understand that their actions can directly affect the health of the creeks and, thereby the fish.

The issue of stormwater quality and quantity discharging into watercourses is important in the valley due to the large amount of agricultural activity and urban residential land use surrounding it. Water running off properties and streets into receiving streams via the storm drains contains pollutants such as oil, gas, lead, heavy metals, and pesticides. Water quality in streams is also negatively affected by excessive amounts of nutrients (nitrogen and phosphorus) from fertilizers, composting grass and leaves deposited along the banks, and animal feces. Excessive flows during storms can result in scouring of the streambed and erosion of the banks.

Storm drainage in the valley is mostly accommodated in open ditches. From an ecological perspective, open ditches aid in filtering contaminants from stormwater and act to slow the water flowing through the ditches, thereby reducing erosion. The result is less stress on the natural functions of the receiving streams than with a piped system.

While farms contribute to the habitat of the valley, they can conflict with environmental values. The use of fertilizers, pesticides and other chemicals can reduce water quality and harm wildlife. Hog fuel used on trails and in riding rings can be detrimental to the soil and leaches into the drainage system and watercourses. *Environmental Guidelines for Producers* (1998 Ministry of Agriculture and Food) and *Watershed Stewardship, A Guide for Agriculture* (1997 Ministry of Fisheries and Oceans) provide best management practices for agriculture.

One method of securing environmentally significant areas has been for government to acquire the lands for park or public rights-of-way. The municipality is continuing to negotiate lease or purchase of land along the west slope of Mt. Douglas and the *Parks Priority Study 1994* identifies additional land for eventual purchase adjacent to Blenkinsop Lake for natural park. While this tool is still available, tight municipal budgets and reduction in funding from senior governments have necessitated consideration of other stewardship options. Other tools are available and changes in Provincial legislation now permit local government more flexibility to work cooperatively with developers and landowners to encourage conservation and effective stewardship of their lands. For example, the Outerbridge property south of Royal Oak Drive, which contains a wetland and nature reserve, was assembled and developed by the landowner. Also, as part of the Blenkinsop/Swan Creek Watershed restoration plan, Saanich, the South Island Aquatic Stewardship Society, Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary, the University of Victoria and Galey Bros. farm have cooperated to restore Blenkinsop Creek through the Galey Bros. property. The project involved relocating the creek, restoring the channel to a more natural shape, and replanting with native plants. Additional restoration work is planned for Blenkinsop Creek, in the Cumberland Road area.

POLICIES

- 6.1 Seek opportunities to preserve and restore ecosystems, which include indigenous trees, shrubs, plants, and rock outcrops within parks, boulevards, road and trail rights-of-way, and other public lands, as well as on private land.
- 6.2 Continue to work with the community, industry, institutions, and schools to increase understanding about the ecological significance of the valley and the opportunities for conservation and effective stewardship of the land.
- 6.3 Identify streams and riparian zones for riparian enhancement and undertake consultation with a focus on agricultural values prior to implementing restoration plans in partnership with landowners, the community, schools, universities, and other government agencies.
- 6.4 Consider amending the *Watercourse Bylaw* to include Grosbeak Creek, consistent with the *Saanich Environmentally Significant Areas Atlas*.
- 6.5 Maintain open ditches as the principal form of storm drainage in conjunction with policy 12.5.

7.0 HOUSING

The housing stock in Blenkinsop is predominantly well-maintained, owner-occupied, detached dwellings. Statistics Canada indicates that as of June, 1996 there were 400 occupied private dwellings. Three new dwellings were constructed between June, 1996 and January, 2002.

**Table 7.1
Housing by Tenure, 1996**

	Blenkinsop	Saanich
Owned	84%	73%
Rented	16%	27%

Source: Statistics Canada, 1996 Municipal Profile

**Table 7.2
Housing Stock by Period of Construction**

	Blenkinsop	Saanich	CRD
Before 1946	4%	12%	15%
1946-1960	29%	20%	16%
1961-1970	13%	16%	16%
1971-1980	13%	22%	24%
1981-1990	35%	21%	18%
After 1990	6%	9%	10%

Source: Statistics Canada, 1996 Municipal Profile

The Blenkinsop Local Area remains mostly outside of the Urban Containment Boundary and partly within the Agricultural Land Reserve. The *Saanich General Plan 1993* growth management policies which restrict urban development to the area inside the Urban Containment Boundary and outside the Agricultural Land Reserve ensure that the rural residential and farm character will be maintained. The policies are supported by zoning, subdivision regulations and servicing policies which only support low density rural residential and agricultural land uses.

The *Saanich General Plan 1993* contains other policies addressing the issues of second dwellings for farm help, building lots for relatives, and retirement homes for existing farm property owners. Some residents are unhappy with restrictions to subdivision particularly as they perceive that other agricultural area within Saanich have been rezoned, over time, for urban residential use. Most property owners, however, purchased land in the valley with an awareness of the municipality's commitment to rural land use. Retaining these restrictive development policies is essential to maintaining an environment that is supportive to farming particularly as external pressures, such as increased traffic through the valley, intensify.

POLICIES

- 7.1 Maintain the 2 ha subdivision minimum outside the Urban Containment Boundary.
- 7.2 Refer to *General Plan* policies when considering relative clause subdivisions, or rezoning for two dwellings on one parcel.

8.0 COMMERCIAL

Commercial activity in the valley is varied, but with an emphasis on the agricultural sector. There are three parcels zoned for farm market use (A-3) where produce and nursery products are retailed. In addition, farm stands along Blenkinsop Road provide small-scale direct marketing of farm produce. Several equestrian stables operate under the A-1 zoning. Non-agricultural commercial uses include a par-three golf course, driving range, mini-golf, and retail golf shop. There are a number of home occupations including landscaping businesses, bed and breakfasts, and personal services.

Direct farm marketing enhances the economic returns for local agricultural producers and the existing farm stands and markets contribute positively to the economy and character of the valley. Farm markets were originally intended to support small business by providing an outlet for farm produce. The sale of imported goods permitted the market to operate year round. In many cases, however, these markets have evolved into intensive, non-soil based market / nursery operations that import nursery stock and farm produce and sell a wide range of ancillary products. The emphasis is on marketing rather than farming. There is concern that introduction of more of these businesses could detract from the rural character of the valley. Rezoning to permit new commercial farm markets and/or retail nurseries should not be supported. Where produce is marketed from road-side stands, farmers should be encouraged to carefully consider safety by locating farm stands where there is good access and adequate parking.

A further issue relates to nursery operations in rural zones. The Zoning Bylaw permits nursery operations as an agricultural use. Nursery products are limited to those produced or grown on the site. There may be a tendency for these operations to evolve into retail nurseries with imported stock and sales of related products and supplies. This is an enforcement issue to be addressed by requiring strict compliance with the Zoning Bylaw requirements.

The Land Reserve Commission has made changes to the *Agricultural Land Reserve Act* to increase the range of value-added farm activities that may be permitted and to clarify their regulation. These activities include agri-tourism activities such as bed and breakfasts and other guest accommodation, and seasonal activities such as corn mazes, pumpkin patches, and Octoberfests. The activities help to supplement farm income and to increase public awareness of farm-related issues and benefits. There are, however, issues that may need to be addressed to minimize potential impacts of these activities of the rural area.

The golf course and driving range in the valley provide significant open space while offering outdoor recreation services close to the urban area. The golf course was constructed prior to the designation of the Agricultural Land Reserve. The driving range was permitted by the Agricultural Land Commission as it did not negatively impact the long-term agricultural capability of the land. Nevertheless, in this constricted location, these types of uses have the potential to negatively impact the rural character and environmental health of the valley through increased traffic, night lighting and other visual impacts, use of fertilizers and pesticides, and general nuisances such as noise and errant golf balls. Rezoning to permit new non-agricultural commercial uses that would compromise the rural character and/or agricultural integrity of the valley should not be supported.

**MAP 8.1
COMMERCIAL
PROPERTIES**

POLICIES

- 8.1 Do not support rezoning for farm markets other than those permitted by the Agricultural Land Reserve Commission, retail nurseries, or non-agricultural commercial recreational uses such as golf courses, putting greens, or driving ranges within the Blenkinsop Valley.
- 8.2
 - a) Support agri-tourism and other value-added farm activities within the Agricultural Land Reserve if permitted by the Agricultural Land Commission.
 - b) Undertake a process to develop appropriate regulations and guidelines for agri-tourism activities in consultation with peninsula municipalities and other stakeholders (see Policy 5.4).
- 8.3 Encourage farm stand operators to provide off-road parking to prevent traffic hazards where appropriate.

9.0 SOCIAL SERVICES AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES

This section provides an overview of community and cultural services within the general area. It by no means covers the full range of facilities and services in the Greater Victoria area that are available to Blenkinsop residents.

Community and Educational Facilities

The term “institutional” generally refers to schools, churches, community residential facilities, daycare centres, and nursing homes. These uses are important to the social fabric of the community. Through a variety of programs they meet many of society’s needs: education, health, religion, and culture.

Blenkinsop Valley is located within two school districts. Students in the north part of the valley attend schools in Saanich School District #63, while students in the south attend schools in Greater Victoria School District #61. The only public school within the valley is Lochside Elementary accommodating students in kindergarten to Grade 5. Braefoot Elementary and Lakehill Elementary, just outside the local area, accommodate students in kindergarten to Grade 7.

In 2001, the Greater Victoria School District Board voted to alter existing grade configurations and implemented a K-5 (elementary), Grade 6-8 (middle) and Grade 9-12 (secondary) grade configuration and to establish an “exemplary” middle-school model. The re-configuration plans are to be implemented over a five year period. Implementation of the Reynolds Secondary Family of Schools which includes Braefoot Elementary and Lakehill Elementary is scheduled to occur in September 2005.

Table 8.1
Elementary School Enrollment

School	Ministry Capacity*	Actual
		Sept 1999
Lochside (K-5)	405	432
Braefoot (K-7)	400	286
Lakehill (K-7)	400	409

* The operating capacity is lower than the Ministry capacity.

Table 8.2
Reynolds Family of Schools

Reynolds Secondary Cedar Hill Middle School Braefoot Elementary Cloverdale Elementary Doncaster Elementary Lakehill Elementary (North residents option to attend Glanford Middle) Quadra Elementary (F.I. and English – all attend Lansdowne Middle Rogers Elementary (Option to attend Glanford Middle)
--

St. Margaret’s School, located within the Blenkinsop Valley, is a private girl’s school with both day students and boarding.

The Sevenoaks Mental Health Facility, located on Blenkinsop Road, provides care to adult residents. This facility has recently undergone changes to improve the sewage disposal system, renovate and build new accommodation.

**MAP 9.1
COMMUNITY
FACILITIES**

Due to the rural nature of the valley, and the location outside the Urban Containment Boundary, new land-intensive institutional uses are not anticipated. Based on the *Saanich General Plan 1993* policies, applications for rezoning to permit new institutional uses within the Agricultural Land Reserve would be opposed. The policies do, however, provide for consideration of institutional uses outside the Agricultural Land Reserve and outside the Urban Containment Boundary where they preserve large amounts of land for open spaces. While there may be merit in considering new institutional uses within Blenkinsop the impacts of access, traffic generation, building scale, parking, municipal services, and open space retention could be significant. As a general approach, new institutional uses are not supported in the valley.

Social Services

A variety of services and facilities, all located outside the Blenkinsop Local Area, are available to local residents. Saanich Recreation operates four community recreation centres offering primary health and recreation services and a variety of facilities, multi-use spaces, and programs catering to seniors, families and youth. Aquatic facilities are available at Gordon Head Recreation Centre and Saanich Commonwealth Place. Pearkes Recreation Centre includes two arenas, indoor lawn bowling and tennis courts, and Cedar Hill Recreation Centre provides racquet sports facilities. Cedar Hill Golf Course is municipally owned and operated. Banquet and meeting facilities are available in the clubhouse.

The New Horizons Seniors Club operates from Cedar Hill Recreation Centre. Les Passmore Activity Centre, located in the Tillicum Local Area, is operated by the Silver Threads Service. Youth activity centres are located at Pearkes Recreation Centre and Gordon Head Recreation Centre. Saanich Neighbourhood Place and Queen Alexandra Centre for Children at Pearkes Centre provide a variety of family support services. In addition to the recreation centres, some programs are offered from municipal parks and schools. Saanich has joint access agreements with Greater Victoria School District #61 and Saanich School District #63, which provide for community access to school facilities.

The Job Search Centre associated with Spectrum Community School offers employment training programs for families and at-risk youth. The centre offers high school completion and job training through the youth internship program for those aged 16-21. Youth and family counselling for those children aged 8-12 is delivered at neighbourhood elementary schools. None of these services are specific to residents of the valley.

Personal Safety and Emergency Preparedness

The Saanich Police Department provides investigative, preventative and community policing programs to protect and serve the residents of Saanich. Crime prevention through the Block Watch program includes safety audits, safety checks and public meetings. Through the schools program, students have access to police liaison officers and there is also a program to establish "police posts," or mobile temporary police stations at malls and community recreation facilities like Pearkes Recreation Centre.

Saanich Emergency Program is co-ordinated by the Saanich Fire Department. The recreation centres and designated primary reception centres following a major disaster.

Arts and Culture

The *Saanich General Plan 1993* recognizes the contribution of the arts to the culture identity and social well-being of the community. It encourages support for acquisition and display of art in public buildings and outdoor spaces. Saanich Recreation Centres and schools offer a variety of arts programs and facilities. Saanich Arts Advisory Committee proposes that public art should be encouraged along the regional trail to enhance the trail and provide a venue for local artists. The statue of “Roy” on the Blenkinsop Bridge is an example of public art in a local context.

POLICIES

- 9.1 Do not support rezoning applications for new institutional uses in the valley.
- 9.2 Continue to work with local schools, parent advisory groups, community associations, established agencies, and local residents, including youth, to determine community service needs and implement needed programs.
- 9.3 Encourage and assist community associations and groups to implement neighbourhood programs such as the Block Watch program.
- 9.4 Support opportunities for art to enhance public and private spaces.
- 9.5 Continue to work with School District #63 and School District #61 to improve community access to school facilities.

10.0 PARKS, OPEN SPACE AND TRAILS

Blenkinsop contains 45.47 ha of parkland, mostly within Mt. Douglas Park which is categorized as a municipal park. Blenkinsop Lake Park is also designated as a municipal park and there are four neighbourhood parks. Half of the Lochside Elementary School site is considered to have a neighbourhood park function.

Table 10.1
Park Summary

Park	Area (ha)		Function
	Existing	Proposed Additional	
Neighbourhood Parks			
Camas	0.34	-	Natural – Garry oak meadow restoration project
Century	0.17	-0.17	Natural
Donwood	0.82	-	Natural
Lohbrunner	1.01	-	Natural
Lochside Elementary	2.18	-	Natural/Structured athletic/unstructured recreational
Valewood *	0.38	-	Natural
Municipal Parks			
Blenkinsop Lake	4.56	8.59	Natural
Mt. Douglas *	36.01	4.46	Natural
Total	45.47	13.05	

* Includes only that part of the park within the Blenkinsop Local Area.

Camas Park is a Garry oak meadow restoration project site. In order to accommodate bike lanes on McKenzie Avenue there are plans to relocate the sidewalk to the park edge. This change will not compromise the restoration project.

The *Parks Priority Study 1994* identifies future park additions. Expansion of Blenkinsop Lake Park to include the riparian area (30 cm or to outside edge of hedgerow) is a long term goal, but worthy of pursuing. The riparian area includes part of the former tree nursery site on the west side of the lake. This nursery operation has been discontinued and the site has been sold. Acquisition of land for a park, beyond the riparian area, should be carefully considered in the context of the Parks Priority Study and having regard for the agricultural potential, should the opportunity arise.

MAP 10.1
PARKS/TRAILS
& GREENWAYS

Mt. Douglas Park is being expanded to include land along the west boundary. Saanich Parks is considering opportunities to provide off-street parking for Mt. Douglas Park trail users, near the Blenkinsop Road trail head.

The Century Road parcel was acquired, in 1982, through 5% park dedication at the time of subdivision. The parcel is small, inaccessible and presently used as pasture by the adjacent property owner. It is located outside of the Urban Containment Boundary and bordered on two sides by Agricultural Land Reserve making expansion opportunities unlikely. This area, however, is part of the Blenkinsop/Cumberland/Barn Creek watershed and Barn Creek flows through the property. A creek/stormwater review is being undertaken for this watershed and the parcel may have a value from a creek/stormwater perspective. Sale of the property should be considered to provide funds for other park acquisitions after the creek/stormwater review is completed.

Private open space also contributes to the rural character, beauty and tranquillity of the valley. These spaces include working agricultural lands, large rural residential and institutional lots, the golf course/driving range, and a private nature reserve on the Outerbridge property at the north end of the valley. This nature reserve contains a wetland and is important for its natural drainage, wildlife and habitat value. The municipality should continue to work with the land owner and environmental agencies to ensure that this amenity is preserved and carefully managed over the long-term.

Green/Blue Spaces Vision

In October 1997, Council endorsed the *Regional Green/Blue Spaces Strategy* prepared by the Capital Regional District and Provincial Capital Commission. The document defines five categories of green/blue spaces: ecological, scenic, renewable resource working landscapes, outdoor recreation, and greenways. The Blenkinsop Valley includes elements of all five green/blue space categories and is a key component of the regional green/blue spaces network. In 2000, Council endorsed *Saanich Green/Blue Spaces: A Framework for Action* to contribute to and complement the goals and objectives of the regional strategy. Further work is required to identify and inventory important green/blue spaces and to develop a greenways plan.

Green/Blue Spaces are land and water areas of environmental, scenic, renewable resource, outdoor recreation, greenway and/or social value. Green/blue spaces could include developed, partly developed and undeveloped public and private spaces.

Greenways and Trails

The Lochside Regional Trail through the Blenkinsop Valley is part of the regional trail system which stretches 100 km from Leechtown, near Sooke, to Sidney. In 2000, construction of a bridge over Blenkinsop Lake completed an important link in this trail system. Further work is planned to address traffic conflicts on the trail including consideration of realignment options south of Nicholson Street to Cedar Hill Cross Road. To access the trail, some trail users are parking on Lohbrunner Road and other streets and conflicts between vehicles, pedestrians, equestrians, and cyclists have increased. Opportunities to provide parking, toilet and other facilities, for trail users requires action as use of this trail is exceeding expectation.

Greenways are narrow corridors that form a network of linkages to major green/blue spaces within the municipality and to green/blue spaces in surrounding jurisdictions. They may include pedestrian, cycling and equestrian trails, scenic roadways, and habitat and wildlife corridors.

A regional priority is an east-west greenway between Goldstream Park and Mt. Douglas Park connecting to the Lochside Trail within the Blenkinsop Valley. A major greenway/trail is proposed between Swan Lake/Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary and the Blenkinsop Valley through Beckwith Park. This vision also includes a connector linking the Lochside Trail and north Gordon Head using Mt. Douglas Cross Road. Also, Saanich Bicycle Advisory Committee and Saanich Parks support opportunities to enhance McKenzie Avenue as a “boulevard street” to provide an east-west connector between the University of Victoria and Trans Canada Highway. As part of this vision, bikeways are being provided along McKenzie Avenue.

POLICIES

- 10.1 Acquire and reserve lands for park as shown on Map 10.1 having regard for the agricultural potential of the lands within the Agricultural Land Reserve.
- 10.2 Consider acquiring all or part of the former nursery site on the west side of Blenkinsop Lake for park in addition to the riparian area shown on Map 10.1, should the opportunity arise and having regard for the agricultural potential and other priorities indicated in the *Park Priority Study*.
- 10.3 Seek approval of the Provincial to dispose of Century Park after the Blenkinsop/Cumberland/Barn Creek Stormwater Review is completed.
- 10.4
 - a) Work with the landowner and environmental agencies to ensure that the Outerbridge Nature Reserve is preserved and carefully managed over the long-term.
 - b) Consider purchase of the nature reserve for park if it is offered for sale by the owner.
- 10.5 Endorse the trails network as identified on Map 10.1.
- 10.6 Retain un-built road rights-of-way and walkways to provide informal open spaces and trail linkages.
- 10.7 Integrate local parks and trails with a municipal-wide greenways system linking key green/blue spaces and the regional trails.
- 10.8 Continue to work with Saanich Parks, CRD parks, other agencies, and private land owners to further develop and enhance the trails network, including the provision of parking for trail users, and washroom facilities along the regional trail, while recognizing privacy and liability issues for adjoining farm parcels.
- 10.9 Recognize the special needs of equestrian users in the valley when designing trails.
- 10.10 Carefully consider the potential impacts of new development adjacent to the regional trail and work with landowners, Saanich Parks and CRD Parks to protect the trail values.

11.0 MOBILITY

Road Network

The road network in Blenkinsop is shown on Map 11.1. It comprises Blenkinsop Road, McKenzie Avenue and Royal Oak Avenue which are major roads, Mt. Douglas Cross Road which is a collector street, and urban and rural residential roads. In addition to serving residents of the valley, Blenkinsop Road also carries commuter traffic from Cordova Bay and Royal Oak. McKenzie Avenue is also identified as a potential boulevard street (see page 45).

Through the local area plan review process, residents have expressed concern about the speed and volume of automobile traffic using Blenkinsop Road and about north bound heavy-truck traffic using the route to avoid weigh scales on Pat Bay Highway. The volume of automobile and heavy-truck traffic through the valley is a particular concern because of the commitment to retain the rural and agricultural quality of the area and the rural streetscape. There are also safety concerns about accessing and exiting rural residential and farm properties and about potential conflicts between slow-moving farm equipment and other road users. Parking on rural roads to access the regional trail is also an issue.

Increased traffic volumes using Blenkinsop Road primarily is a result of urban growth in the Royal Oak and Cordova Bay areas and the attractiveness of this route for commuters. Blenkinsop Road is a major north-south corridor in Saanich and reducing automobile traffic volumes is unlikely. While traffic speed and illegal passing is a concern for some residents, the Police Department reports low numbers of motor vehicle incidents (MVI's) in the valley. Heavy truck traffic through the valley should decline with the phased closure, by September 2003, of the Trio Gravel pit operation in Cordova Bay.

The character of Blenkinsop Road is valued by the residents of the valley and should be protected. To maintain this character, the road should not be widened beyond two travel lanes. Additional turning lanes may be required at the intersections with Royal Oak Drive and McKenzie Avenue. Roadside vegetation should be retained and, where possible, pedestrian facilities should be separated from the road by a boulevard or hedgerow. In addition, consideration could be given to installing information signs at the road entrances to the valley and along the Lochside Regional Trail to inform road/trail users that they are entering an agricultural area and to expect farm vehicles and other hazards. This could also help to build respect and understanding for local food production.

The Engineering Department has long-term plans to realign Mt. Douglas Cross Road at Glendenning Road to improve the geometry of the jogged intersection and address safety concerns. The design should not compromise the traffic calming properties that the sharp turn now provides.

MAP 11.1
ROAD NETWORK

MAP 11.2
PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES

MAP 11.3
BICYCLE FACILITIES

Pedestrian/Bicycle/Equestrian Mobility

In the valley, the major pedestrian/bicycle/equestrian facility is the Lochside Regional Trail. Along the Blenkinsop Road, there is a paved shoulder to serve as a walking area on the west side from Royal Oak Drive to Mt. Douglas Cross Road, crossing to the east side to McKenzie Avenue. This shoulder is also used by cyclists. There is a separated pathway between Pearce Crescent and Royal Oak Drive, designated as a safe route to Lochside Elementary School. Some residents have requested that the paved shoulder should be extended on both sides for the entire length of Blenkinsop Road and that a crosswalk should be installed on Blenkinsop Road at Pearce Crescent. Topography and trees would make extending the paved shoulder difficult to accomplish while retaining the rural character.

A pedestrian/bicycle/equestrian facility along Mt. Douglas Cross Road between Glendenning Road and the Lochside Trail is a high priority for the community and an important element of the vision for a greenway between Lochside Trail and Gordon Head. There are deep ditches on either side of Mt. Douglas Cross Road making it hazardous for pedestrians and equestrians. Where practicable, this multi-use facility should be separated from the roadway for safety and to maintain the rural road character and open drainage. Consideration should be given to the special needs of equestrian users.

Children's safety is a concern particularly for parents of students who walk or cycle to school along Blenkinsop Road. The provision of safe walking places is an issue that is being addressed gradually through the Capital Works Program. The priority is safe routes to school. Based on the policy adopted by Council, new safe routes to school plans, or changes to existing plans, are to be initiated by the school principals and parents' groups. The plans are to be forwarded to the Engineering Department, where they will be assessed based on proposed facility warrants, capital budget priorities, the crosswalk "Hazard Rating System" evaluation, and possible impact on local residents. Braefoot and Lochside Elementary Schools have "safe routes to school" plans.

The Lochside Trail provides an important north-south multi-use trail connection through the valley, a safe and direct route for commuting cyclists as well as recreational users, and reduces conflicts with motor vehicles on Blenkinsop Road. Consideration is being given to creating safe accesses to the trail for both bicycles, pedestrian and equestrian users including a multi-use east-west connector along Mt. Douglas Cross Road. The issue of parking for trail users requires further investigation. Bicycle facilities have been provided along McKenzie Avenue east of Blenkinsop Road. Planned bike lanes on McKenzie Avenue between Blenkinsop Road and the Lochside Trail at Borden Street will require some right-of-way acquisition. Also, the sidewalk adjacent to Camas Park is to be relocated closer to the park to provide for the bike lanes. This change will not compromise the Garry oak meadow restoration project.

Transit

Although Blenkinsop Road is a major access to Cordova Bay, there are no transit services through the Blenkinsop Valley. Transit users must go north to Royal Oak or south to McKenzie Avenue to access bus routes. There is interest from some Blenkinsop and Cordova Bay residents in having better access to bus routes and more frequent service. Opportunities should be monitored through BC Transit.

POLICIES

- 11.1 Endorse the road network and classification as shown on Map 11.1.
- 11.2 Maintain Blenkinsop Road as a two-lane road with paved shoulders, a separated pedestrian/equestrian pathway where practicable, and turning lanes only at the Royal Oak-Blenkinsop and McKenzie-Blenkinsop intersections.
- 11.3 Install information signs at the road entrances to the valley and along Lochside Regional Trail to inform users that they are in an agricultural area and to respect private property and slow-moving farm vehicles.
- 11.4 Construct a multi-use pedestrian/cycling/equestrian facility on Mt. Douglas Cross Road between Lochside Trail and Blenkinsop Road taking into account the adjacent agricultural properties.
- 11.5 Consult the *Braefoot Action Plan 2001* when considering changes to Braefoot Road or Mt. Douglas Cross Road within Blenkinsop.
- 11.6 Assign a high priority to constructing the planned bicycle facilities on McKeznie Avenue between Blenkinsop Road and Lochside Trail at Borden Street.
- 11.7 Investigate opportunities to reduce potential conflicts between cyclists and automobile traffic by reducing the number of local streets intersecting McKenzie Avenue between Blenkinsop Road and Cedar Hill Cross Road.
- 11.8 Support initiatives to enhance the regional trail including the provision of parking and other facilities for trail users (see Policy 10.7).
- 11.9 Continue to monitor transit demand and opportunities for improved transit service to Blenkinsop, through BC Transit.

12.0 PUBLIC WORKS AND DEVELOPMENT COST CHARGES

The Engineering Department is responsible for providing and replacing infrastructure and budgeting for improvements throughout Saanich. The Parks and Public Works Department is responsible for maintenance and operation. In the Blenkinsop Valley, infrastructure is typical of rural areas, and not as extensive as more urbanized parts of the municipality.

Sewers

The Sewer Service Boundary defines the extent of the area that is serviced or planned to be serviced with municipal sewers. Most parcels in the Blenkinsop Valley are serviced by on-site sewage disposal systems and lie outside the Sewer Service Boundary. The exceptions are along the west and north boundaries where the Sewer Service Boundary has been extended within the Urban Containment Boundary to include lands that could be serviced by gravity west toward Broadmead or north to Royal Oak Drive and in the southeast corner where municipal sewers were extended beyond the Urban Containment Boundary to resolve a health problem along Braefoot Road caused by failing or malfunctioning on-site disposal systems.

Pearce Crescent, a small-lot residential enclave near the centre of the valley, is serviced by on-site septic systems. The Medical Health Officer has determined that existing systems are failing and most are not repairable. To resolve this health concern Council, in 2001, extended the Sewer Service Boundary beyond the Urban Containment Boundary to include Pearce Crescent. In May 2002, it was extended again to include several existing houses on the east side of Cordova Bay Road north of Miramar Drive. A new sewer main and pump station is being constructed to service this area to the Cordova Bay sewer system. The new sewer has been designed to service other properties to the north of Pearce Crescent along Blenkinsop Road if the Medical Health Officer determines that a health concern exists and the properties are included within the Sewer Service Boundary by Council.

An area at the north end of the valley, east of Blenkinsop Road, remains outside the Urban Containment Boundary and Sewer Service Boundary. Geographically, it relates more to Cordova Bay than to the Blenkinsop Valley. Theoretically, the area within Blenkinsop, north of the height of land, can be serviced by gravity to the Cordova Bay sewer system. As no capacity allowance was made to service this area in the Cordova Bay system, inclusion in the Urban Containment Boundary would constitute a major change and cannot be supported in the context of current *Saanich General Plan 1993* policies. This area is being monitored for health problems resulting from failing septic systems.

MAP 12.1
SEWER ENTERPRISE
BOUNDARY

**MAP 12.2
MAJOR DRAINAGE
SYSTEM**

Floodplain and Drainage

The floodplain performs an important hydrological function within the municipal stormwater management system which comprises enclosed storm drains, open ditches, natural watercourses, and the floodplain. The Blenkinsop Valley drains into Swan Creek and eventually into the Colquitz River system. Unlike piped systems, grassy ditches throughout the valley provide an environmental benefit by filtering and improving the quality of stormwater before it enters natural systems. This reduces sedimentation and erosion by slowing stormwater run-off. The Fill Bylaw is intended to restrict the addition of fill that would compromise the stormwater storage capacity of the floodplain.

Saanich's *Watercourse Bylaw* restricts fouling, obstructing, or impeding the flow in watercourses in order to maintain the quality of water and the rate of flow. Watercourse means a river, stream, creek, waterway, lagoon, lake, spring, swamp, marsh, or other natural body of fresh water; or a canal, ditch, reservoir or other man-made surface feature in which water flows constantly, intermittently or at any time. Grosbeak Creek which flows into the north end of Blenkinsop Lake is identified in the Saanich Environmentally Significant Areas Atlas (1999), but not in the Watercourse Bylaw. An amendment to the Watercourse Bylaw to eliminate this inconsistency should be considered.

Within the valley, a weir at the Blenkinsop Lake outlet and a dam perform flood control as shown on Map 12.2. These controls hold winter storage, drain off water in the spring for agriculture, and hold water in the summer for irrigation. An operating curve established by Saanich Engineering, in consultation with stakeholders and administered by Saanich Public Works, governs flood control in the effort to balance downstream flows and upstream storage. As agriculture is a significant land use in the valley, managing stormwater to have a positive impact on producers is desirable. The Cumberland dam and weir should continue to be operated in a cooperative manner.

Water Supply and Irrigation

The Blenkinsop Valley is served by water supply for both domestic and agricultural users. Recently, an upgraded line was installed in the Pheasantwood Terrace area that provides enough capacity for agricultural irrigation in addition to residential needs. This supply is supplemented by water licences to Blenkinsop Lake for irrigation that are held by a number of producers. Use of lake water is governed informally by licence holders in an effort to protect water levels. Any change to this positive approach, however, could negatively impact the recreation value at the bridge. Discussions with water licence holders and the Province should be initiated with a view to reducing the number of licences and volume of water to be used for irrigation.

Development Cost Charge Areas

Council may, by bylaw, impose development cost charges (DCCs) to provide funds to assist the municipality in paying the capital cost of providing, constructing, altering, or expanding sewage, water, drainage, and highway facilities and acquiring and improving parkland to accommodate new development. New development throughout the local area is subject to development cost charges for parks, major roads and bikeways.

POLICIES

- 12.1 Do not extend the Sewer Service Boundary beyond the Urban Containment Boundary unless there is evidence of a current health problem and no reasonable alternative is feasible.
- 12.2 Support education programs to inform residents about proper use, functioning, and maintenance of septic systems.
- 12.3 Request the Regional Health Officer to continue to monitor the performance of septic systems in the Blenkinsop Valley and report to the Director of Engineering Services.
- 12.4 Consider amending the Watercourse Bylaw to include Grosbeak Creek as identified in the *Saanich Environmentally Significant Areas Atlas 1999* (see Policy 6.4).
- 12.5 Continue to support the environmental enhancement of the ditched portions of watercourses as opportunities arise, and if there is support from the property owners (see Policy 6.5).
- 12.6 Periodically review the ditch maintenance program to ensure that it is environmentally sensitive and the frequency meets the needs of local farmers and residents.
- 12.7 Re-evaluate the operating curve of the Cumberland Dam and weir in consultation with engineering, public works and environment staff, and local farmers, residents, and other stakeholders, as required.
- 12.8 Initiate discussions with Blenkinsop Lake water licence holders and the Province to consider reducing the allowable take, having regard for the potential impact on agriculture.

13.0 DEVELOPMENT PERMIT AREAS

The *Local Government Act*, permits Council, in an Official Community Plan, to designate development permit areas. The Official Community Plan may contain objectives and guidelines affecting the form and character of commercial, industrial or multi-family development within the designated development permit area. Development permit guidelines may also specify the means of protecting the natural environment, its ecosystems and biological diversity, for protecting development from hazardous conditions and protecting farming.

Within a development permit area an owner must obtain a development permit before subdividing land or constructing, adding to, or altering a building unless specifically exempted by the Plan. In areas designate for protection of the natural environment, its ecoystems and biological diversity or for protection of development from hazardous conditions, land must not be altered without first obtaining a development permit. Council may issue a development permit which may vary or supplement a regulation of the *Subdivision Bylaw* or *Zoning Bylaw*. A development permit cannot vary use, density or floodplain specification.

In Blenkinsop, the driving range is a specific development permit area and the floodplain is a development permit area for “protection of the natural environment, its ecosystems, and biodiversity” and for “protection of development from hazardous conditions”. Development that is not within a specific development permit area may be subject to the guidelines of the Saanich General Development Permit Area. The development permit areas include environmental guidelines for preserving areas which contain plants and animals which are designated as endangered or vulnerable, for minimizing the impact on the aquatic environment by reducing the amount of impervious cover, and where applicable, for restoration of riparian zones. Justification and guidelines for the development permit areas are included in Appendix “N” to the Official Community Plan.

Development permit areas and guidelines are reviewed periodically. In Blenkinsop, a new development permit area should be considered for the protection of farming (see Policy 5.6). Also, consideration is being given to establishing a municipal wide development permit area for the protection of natural watercourses along with amendments to the *Watercourse Bylaw*.

POLICIES

- 13.1 Consider amending the *Official Community Plan Appendix N – Development Permit Area Justification and Guidelines* to designate development permit areas in Blenkinsop for protection of farming.

MAP 13.1
DEVELOPMENT
PERMIT AREAS

14.0 STRUCTURE MAP

The Local Area Plan includes policies which address specific issues in more detail than the Saanich General Plan. The structure map illustrates the comprehensive application of these policies within the local area. It shows general land use, the transportation network and major open space areas. It is not a zoning map and does not indicate density.

The structure map (back cover) is only one part of the Local Area Plan and both must be considered in association with the General Plan. In the event, however, of a difference between the policy direction of the Local Area Plan and the General Plan, the Local Area Plan policy will apply. Where the Local Area Plan is silent on an issue, the policies in the General Plan provide the framework for decision making.

The following definitions clarify the intent and content of each of the major components of the structure map, as well as other terms used throughout the plan. The General Plan contains a more comprehensive list of definitions.

DEFINITIONS

Agricultural Land Reserve – means areas designated as Agricultural Land Reserve and subject to the Agricultural Land Reserve Act.

Boulevard Street – means a major road or collector street containing vehicle lanes, bicycle lanes, and pedestrian facilities and designated for special consideration with respect to boulevard/median landscaping and planting.

Collector Street – means a street which provides services to secondary traffic generations (i.e. neighbourhood commercial centre and parks) and traffic between neighbourhoods, as well as providing direct access to residential properties. Typical traffic volumes are less than 8000 vehicles per day. Transit service is permitted.

Commercial – means an area developed or zoned for a variety of commercial activities including retail, service station, office, medical, and assembly type uses.

Community Park – means a park that serves several neighbourhoods and attracts users from up to three kilometres away. Typically, it contains high quality play fields and courts or special natural or horticultural features.

Designated Heritage Structure – means a building or structure on the Community Heritage Register that has been protected by a heritage designation bylaw.

Development Permit Area – means an area designated under the Local Government Act, requiring special consideration for the natural environment, hazardous conditions, commercial /industrial, or multi-family residential development.

Riparian Area – means the area adjacent to a stream, lake or wetland, the transition between water and land. It is vegetated, often with plants, shrubs and trees that are distinct from the surrounding upland.

Sewer Service Boundary – means a boundary identifying the area which is serviced or intended to be serviced with municipal sewers.

Urban Containment Boundary – means the line defined in the *Saanich General Plan 1993* or local area plans which separates urban from rural land uses. Sewer service does not generally extend beyond the Urban Containment Boundary.

Watercourse – means a river, stream, creek, waterway, lagoon, lake, spring, swamp, marsh, or other natural body of fresh water; or a canal, ditch, reservoir or other man-made surface feature in which water flows constantly, intermittently or at any time.

**APPENDIX 1
BLENKINSOP SURVEY RESULTS**

(Note: This survey was intended only to indicate residents' perceptions of the Blenkinsop area and is not statistically valid)
163 Surveys returned

Note: Due to rounding, responses may not add up to 100%

1. Please indicate the appropriate answer:

		Strongly Agree %	Somewhat Agree %	Uncertain %	Somewhat Disagree %	Strongly Disagree %	Total response %
a	The agricultural character and open space of the Blenkinsop Valley should be preserved.	72.4	15.3	3.7	4.9	3.7	163
b	Traffic speed and volume on Blenkinsop Road is an issue.	40.5	29.4	9.2	13.4	7.4	163
c	Blenkinsop Valley is well served by parks and recreational facilities.	43.8	32.1	7.4	11.1	5.6	162
d	There are concerns for pedestrian mobility and safety in the area.	38.9	29	17.3	10.5	4.3	162
e	Bicycle access through the area is important and must be improved.	35.6	23.3	12.3	11	8.6	163
f	There are adequate walking trails and access to parks.	35.6	35	11	11.7	6.7	163
g	Farm stands and markets contribute positively to the economy and character of the valley.	56.4	30.7	6.1	3.1	3.7	163
h	Golf courses and facilities are a suitable use/activity for the area.	36	26.7	8.7	8.7	9.9	161
i	Bus service through the area is not a priority.	21	19.1	21.6	16.7	21.6	162
j	Access to farm stands along Blenkinsop Road is safe.	9.9	30.4	14.9	28.6	16.1	161
k	The character of Blenkinsop Road should be maintained with no widening of the paved roadway.	41.6	15.5	8.1	18	16.8	161
l	Key environmental features such as lakeshore vegetation, floodplain and trees at Mt. Douglas Park should be protected.	69.9	19.6	4.9	3.1	2.5	163
m	Agriculture activity and viability should be supported.	70.6	18.3	4.3	3	3.7	163
n	There should be better buffering between agricultural and urban uses.	18.4	23.3	26.4	21.5	10.4	163
o	More farm stands would be beneficial.	13.5	23.3	21.5	33.1	8.6	163
p	It is important to maintain water levels in Blenkinsop Lake.	46.6	24.5	20.9	4.3	3.7	163

2. What do you like most about living in the Blenkinsop Valley that should be preserved in the Local Area Plan update?

- rural character
- close to urban area and conveniences
- agriculture
- serenity and quiet
- Lochside Trail
- wildlife and natural habitat
- green open space
- close to Mt. Douglas Park
- farm stands
- fresh air
- ponds, lakes, marshes
- ALR
- future development potential

3. What do you dislike most about living in the Blenkinsop Valley that should be addressed in the Local Area Plan update?

- industrial uses
- trucks at 4149 Blenkinsop Road
- septic systems needed at Pearce Crescent
- the prohibition of subdivision and land use regulations
- biking on Blenkinsop Road
- pressure to develop: growth
- deer
- heavy traffic on Blenkinsop Road
- lack of public transit
- farm dust
- open ditches and narrow road
- speeding traffic
- drainage
- floodplain at Braefoot
- unkempt boulevards
- too few hiking and walking opportunities
- safety issues for pedestrians and cyclists
- bikes using the trails in Mt. Douglas Park
- lack of crosswalks
- lack of pedestrians facilities and trails
- commercial activity
- large homes out of character with area
- lack of street lights
- high taxes for few services (sewer, subdivision rights)
- Simon Road subdivision
- litter and vandalism, teen partying
- slow erosion of rural character
- no-passing sections on Blenkinsop Road
- truck traffic
- agricultural land not worth preserving

4. Is there any other issues which you feel strongly about? Please attach additional page if necessary.

- include Braefoot in UCB
- exclude Braefoot from Blenkinsop LAP
- complete Lochside Trail and bridge
- stop illegal suites
- convert empty lot on Pearce Crescent to "park"
- no increase in taxes
- drainage at McKenzie/Braefoot/Blenkinsop
- proper walkway on Mt. Douglas Cross Road
- PA systems at St. Margaret's and Ambassador Park, too loud
- no more golf courses, driving ranges or putting greens
- impact of increased traffic with Cordova Bay developments
- join Praisewood to trail

STRUCTURE MAP