

**MINUTES**  
**ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL AREAS ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
Held virtually via Microsoft Teams  
**May 19, 2021 at 6:02 pm**

Present: Councillor Rebecca Mersereau (Chair), Ryan Senechal, Kevin Brown, Al-Nashir Charania, Braedan Drouillard, Tiffany Joseph, Anqian Wei, Jennifer Grant and Karthik Narayan (6:30 p.m.).

Staff: Pam Hartling, Senior Planner (Community Planning); Adriane Pollard, Manager of Environmental Services; Rebecca Newlove, Manager of Sustainability; and Megan MacDonald, Committee Clerk.

Regrets: George Klima.

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## MINUTES

**MOVED by K. Brown and Seconded by A. Charania: “That the Minutes of the Environment and Natural Areas Advisory Committee meeting held April 21, 2021, be adopted as circulated.”**

**CARRIED**

## CORDOVA BAY LOCAL AREA PLAN

Pam Hartling, Senior Planner (Community Planning) provided an overview of the proposed Cordova Bay Local Area Plan (LAP). The following was noted:

- The LAP is part of the Official Community Plan framework. The LAP provides detail at a neighborhood level, incorporating the latest municipal direction including Indigenous content, housing policy, climate change and the Active Transportation Plan.
- There were many opportunities for community input while the plan was being drafted. This input helped identify issues, priorities, and the future vision for transportation and active transportation. A village design charrette was created, a transportation workshop was held, along with advisory committee input and survey feedback.
- The WSÁNEĆ Leadership Council (WLC) participated in creating the draft LAP.
- Cordova Bay is an area that is abundant in natural beauty and outdoor recreation.
- Natural features and marine areas are important assets of the identity of Cordova bay.
- Cordova Bay is part a rare Douglas-fir ecosystem. There are wetlands and riparian areas, plenty of beaches and intertidal areas, as well as First Nations cultural landscapes and foodscapes, and plans to protect environmentally sensitive areas.
- The environmental aspects work to protect and enhance the natural areas network, maintain and grow the tree canopy, protect marine shoreline, improve watershed health, welcome First Nations input, conserve habitat and promote biodiversity.
- LAP contains a Natural Areas Network map which was developed with the Environment Department staff, who provided background information and identified environmental assets in the area. This map helps to visualize where development will be by outlining the Urban Containment Boundary (UCB). Development will be compact within the UCB, outside the UCB will be retained for low density and agricultural use.
- Once complete, the biodiversity strategy will benefit the natural areas of Cordova Bay.
- The plan outlines possible park acquisitions, as well as the opportunity for acquisitions

- through the development process.
- Natural assets will be highlighted for the benefits they bring to the community.
  - Stewardship opportunities will support connections with members of the community.
  - Policies in the plan will protect environmentally sensitive areas (ESA). There are ways to promote stewardship and nature aping, manage invasive species, and maintain the treed slope of the ridge for stability.
  - Native plants will be promoted in areas near ESA's, along with celebrating and promoting the beauty of these natural areas. We will continue to collaborate with local First Nations on these projects, as well as new partnerships for research, monitoring and education.
  - Infill will be limited in sensitive coastal areas. Tools to protect the shoreline during the development process will be implemented with polices and regulations.
  - Green shores and naturalizing the shorefront will be promoted.
  - Efforts will be made to support senior levels of government, as well as First Nations governments, as well as working in partnerships with them to achieve goals.
  - New partnerships for education and possible stewardship programs will help enhance the natural environment. Citizen science programs will also be beneficial to all.
  - Watersheds and aquatic health will be enhanced by the creation of the integrated storm water management plan. A maximum on-site infiltration bylaw will be considered. Staff will encourage permeability through site design.
  - Watershed stewardship initiatives will be promoted, along with the development of a restoration plan for Noble Creek and the consideration of adding new wetlands.
  - The urban forest will be enhanced by limiting infill in steep slope areas of ridge, retaining indigenous trees, prioritizing protection of mature trees during the development process. There are policies to maintain and enhance tree canopy on key corridors. Road designs include space for planting boulevard trees, and considering incentives for property owners to retain trees on their properties.
  - The plan works towards reconciliation by providing a balanced telling of history. There is an ongoing open dialogue with the WLC, working to build relationships with local First Nations. There is a priority to protect heritage and cultural resources, as well as increasing the presence of First Nations arts and culture.
  - Creating a welcoming place is important to local First Nations, as the area is rich in history prior to colonial settlement. This will be achieved by identifying First Nations sites of significance, adding First Nations language onto signs, renaming places of significance, and installing Indigenous public art. Efforts will be made to restore cultural landscapes/foodscapes, as well as collaborating on environmental projects.
  - Implementation priorities were discussed, many of which are currently underway.

\*\*\* K. Narayan entered the meeting at 6:30 p.m. \*\*\*

Following discussion with members of the committee, the following items were noted:

- A maximum onsite filtration bylaw could potentially require that a certain proportion of storm water is infiltrated onsite in permeable areas on a development site. Planning currently encourages on site filtration, but it is not currently a bylaw requirement.
- Council recently received a report on the multiyear Integrated Storm Water Management Project. There has been a transition to the integrated approach recently.
- Urban forest canopy goals may not reconcile with the desired ocean view for residents.
- Given the slope in this area, trees may impede the view. There are references to view corridors in public realm, and Saanich will encourage tree maintenance. A policy in the previous LAP stating that existing views that should be protected through the redevelopment process was removed, as it is not enforceable.
- The Plan does not mention oil spill management as it relates to the marine shoreline. There is an opportunity to indicate that there will be interjurisdictional cooperation

- around protection of the marine shoreline, or include a definition of senior government.
- There is uncertainty surrounding the resumption of LAP's after the housing strategy.
  - New techniques around public engagement and efforts to work with local First Nations will be implemented in all LAP processes going forward.
  - It is important to recognize the importance of the actions of private landowners and promoting stewardship of natural areas and the environment by property owners.
  - Interpretive panels and educational signs will be placed near beaches, parks and natural areas, which will act as tools to promote the natural beauty of Cordova Bay.
  - There could be more mention of youth in the plan, as far as recreation and education.
  - Recognizing the history of Indigenous people residing in Cordova Bay is appreciated.
  - Enabling First Nations to return to Cordova Bay by providing housing that is truly affordable was highlighted as an important item that should be supported.
  - There are opportunities for affordable housing, such as on a Saanich owned parcel on Doumac Avenue, which will be considered for non-market housing. The large Trio site will support a mix of housing option. The developer of the site will be encouraged to work with a nonmarket housing provider to provide some affordable housing as well.
  - Churches in the area may be interested in converting to affordable/non market sites.
  - Coastal mapping and initiatives monitoring sea level rise are underway. There are policies around housing and land use, which mean limited infill in coastal areas. The biodiversity Strategy will provide information on further coastal protection initiatives.

**MOVED by J. Grant and Seconded by A. Wei: "That the Environment and Natural Areas Advisory Committee supports the adoption of the environment and natural areas focused components of the Cordova Bay Local Area Plan."**

**CARRIED**  
**With R. Senechal OPPOSED**

\*\*\* P. Hartling exited the meeting at 7:19 p.m. \*\*\*

## **NATURAL GAS HOOKUPS IN NEW CONSTRUCTION**

K. Brown discussed discouraging natural gas hookups in new construction to reduce emissions, and how it could potentially be applied in Saanich. The following was noted:

- Saanich has made significant progress with the Environmental Bill of Rights, the Climate Plan and other initiatives to reduce emissions.
- Natural gas is considered to be a convenient, reliable fuel for heating and cooking.
- Residential building operations contribute a significant amount of urban carbon emissions. The Saanich climate plan (p48) indicates residential buildings supplied with gas contributed 35-40% of residential building Green House Gas (GHG) emissions, those carbon emissions largely arise from direct combustion in the building and (for fossil natural gas) upstream emissions associated with its extraction and transport, this is compared to <10% in those from buildings which use electricity instead.
- Natural gas is marketed and perceived as cheap (ignoring potential hookup costs and externalized costs of gas extraction, climate change etc.). However cooking with natural gas can decrease indoor air quality, particularly if ventilation is inadequate.
- Carbon emissions from fossil fuels could be reduced by using reusable resources.
- Cities, such as Vancouver, are increasingly trying to ban or discourage gas hookups in new residential construction. The Saanich 2020 Climate Report Card (p13) suggests that residential gas hookups and gas consumption increased between 2018 and 2019.
- There is interest in finding out if there could be a meaningful effect on carbon emissions by discouraging or banning natural gas hook ups during construction in Saanich.

The Manager of Sustainability provided information related to natural gas emissions in Saanich, the following was noted:

- Buildings account for approximately 28% of our community's emissions. Natural gas in buildings caused 45% of the building emissions in Saanich. Homes that are heated by oil or propane have a higher emissions factor but have lower use in the community.
- Efficiency rebates are being offered, but emissions are going up as the amount of natural gas being used is increasing. An increase of 1% of the total community wide emissions was caused by new connections, reducing this would be ideal but complex.
- Vancouver can ban natural gas hook ups as the city is governed by the Vancouver Charter, which grants different powers than those in other BC communities, which are governed by the Local Government Act. Banning natural gas hook ups during construction would not be possible to implement in Saanich or anywhere else in BC.
- The Province has committed to enabling direct regulation of GHG emissions from new construction, we are awaiting updates on this process, expected later this year.
- The BC Building Code is expected to be updated in 2022, we understand that the energy efficiency standard in the code will be equivalent to Step 3. This is the current level of adoption by Saanich for part 9 buildings.
- Staff expect to begin engaging industry on the higher steps of the Step Code in fall 2021 in collaboration with other local municipalities and potentially the CRD in order to support regional consistency. They will be looking at a 'low carbon pathway' as part of this engagement.
- As part of CleanBC, the Province committed to having an Alterations Code in place by 2024 that would regulate upgrades in existing buildings. Saanich staff are part of several networks to ensure we are engaged as the development of the Alteration Code commences later this year.
- The Federal government has indicated they are working on an Equipment Roadmap to regulate heating systems, and potentially require heat pump installations and/or heating systems that perform at greater than 100% efficiency by 2035.
- There are a multitude of actions to support fuel switching to renewables in existing buildings including incentives, communications campaigns and a regional retrofit service. Staff are in discussions regarding alternative policy options to support or regulate renewable energy heating systems in buildings.

The following was noted in response to questions and comments from the committee:

- Banning something should be used as a last resort, there are many other tools that can be implemented prior to an outright ban. It is important to consider who these actions would impact, with an ethical framework considering all factors.
- The energy pyramid considers energy conservation to be the most important factor in reducing GHG emissions. Reducing use and increasing efficiency is critical.
- Passive home heating, this allows the home to absorb the sun's light to heat and cool the home seasonally using less energy. There are more ways to conserve heat. Installation and alternative building strategies.
- Many homes built to higher energy step code levels do not require natural gas as they are highly efficient. With buildings being built this way and the lower cost to install, it makes more sense to install a heat pump which also provides cool air in the summer.
- It is important to advocate with senior government for energy efficiency incentives.

**SUMMARY OF PUBLIC FEEDBACK ON THE DRAFT PRINCIPALS, GOALS & OBJECTIVES FOR THE ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY FRAMEWORK**

Due to time restraints this item will be included on the next meeting agenda.

**SAANICH ENVIRONMENTAL AWARDS UPDATE**

The Manager of Environmental Services provided a verbal update on the Environmental Awards. There are zero nominations so far which is considered to be somewhat normal at this time in the nomination period. Committee members encouraged to promote the awards by sharing the call for nominations on social media or by submitting a nomination.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 8:12 p.m.

**NEXT MEETING**

Next meeting is Wednesday June 16, 2021 at 6:00 p.m.

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Councillor Mersereau, Chair

I hereby certify these Minutes are accurate.

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Committee Secretary