

2020 Mayor's annual address

Introduction

Good evening residents of Saanich.

Thank you for joining us for the second annual address of our term.

This evening I would like to describe a series of highlights achieved in Saanich this past year and then take us on a journey over some of the tremendous opportunities that lay ahead in 2021. These opportunities are aspirational. They are ones to explore and perhaps deliver during the next two years of our mandate.

Tonight's descriptions draw upon the work of your Council and our staff. Importantly, they also draw upon examples provided by our amazing residents and community stakeholders. Working together these have done so much to enable Saanich to be the most remarkable coastal, urban and rural municipality that it truly is.

First let's acknowledge that the harsh disruptive realities of COVID-19 have dramatically impacted not just the municipality but all your lives directly.

On behalf of Council and staff, I would like to thank our residents and our businesses one and all for their understanding, their adaptability and frankly for their stoic and kind cooperation under such duress. This collective response in such difficult times is remarkable. It is greatly appreciated.

We cannot forget a special shout out for our heroic frontline workers. Consequently, this year's address is dedicated to thanking our residents, our business community and all our frontline workers. Thank you. You have all been amazing.

Additionally, within the Corporation of Saanich itself, our staff have really come together. They have been really, really working for you. Saanich staff and management have overcome COVID hurdle after COVID hurdle after COVID hurdle to deliver the services you rightly expect.

It has not been easy. It has been tremendously difficult. However, in the reality of COVID-uncertainly, it has been essential. The results speak for themselves. In all departments Saanich staff from top to bottom have delivered.

Consequently, this address, unlike in 2019, will not delve into granular aspects of departmental operations. Instead staff's tremendous efforts in 2020 on your behalf are being recognized through a certificate of appreciation:

Certificate of Appreciation

This certificate is presented to:

All Saanich Staff

On behalf of Council and our Senior Management Team, I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to each and every one of our amazing staff. We greatly appreciate all that you have each individually worked so hard to accomplish during these most challenging of times. Your dedication, thoughtfulness and your terrific can-do approach has been simply remarkable.

You have made Saanich Proud

Presented on December 7th 2020

Fred Haynes

Mayor

*Susan Brice
Councillor*

*Judy Brownoff
Councillor*

*Nathalie Chambers
Councillor*

*Zac de Vries
Councillor*

*Karen Harper
Councillor*

*Rebecca Mersereau
Councillor*

*Colin Plant
Councillor*

*Ned Taylor
Councillor*

I turn now to highlighting several of our really noteworthy achievements in 2020. These cover our leadership on climate change, housing supply and affordability, child care, addictions and mental health, environmental sustainability, and community inclusiveness and diversity.

Climate Change:

Addressing the crisis of climate change is a top priority for Saanich. It has been for a considerable time. Building on our legacy of previous actions, exceptional recognition for our Accelerated Climate Action Plan were received. Some examples:

1) Our plan was announced by the Union British Columbia Municipalities as winner of the Community Energy Association (CEA) Climate and Energy Action Award in the Community Planning and Development category.

2) A Silver Award for Excellence in Policy Planning from the Planning Institute of British Columbia (PIBC). This was second only to the City of Vancouver which took the gold.

3) We received the top 'A' grade for the reporting of climate and environmental data by the CDP. The CDP runs the global disclosure system on environmental impacts for cities, states, regions, companies and investors. It is the gold standard of environmental reporting. In Canada only four others received a similar grade. These were the cities of Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto and Halifax. Reflecting our leadership at the world level, Saanich was just one of 88 candidates from a pool of 20,000+ cities to receive the "A" grade.

4) Saanich stepped up to join the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy – an international alliance of municipalities working to fight climate change. Our voice matters. This enables us to effectively deliver on our responsibility to share on a global level the innovative approaches and best practices developed in Saanich.

5) Locally, Saanich continues its work with the [One Planet Living](#) model. This provides a proven guide for residents on living within the resources of one planet and to meeting sustainability goals. Only three other municipalities have qualified for the One Planet Living framework; the cities of Durban (South Africa), Elsinore (Denmark) and Oxfordshire (United Kingdom).

From these examples we see that Saanich is recognized by some of the world's top monitoring groups for our leadership in addressing the crisis of climate change.

Locally, delivering actions within our plan has involved working with regional partners, educational institutions, other organizations and securing grants from provincial and federal governments.

Some examples include our new Electric Mobility Strategy, new bylaws requiring EV ready infrastructure in fresh builds, that Saanich is already home to 95 EV public and municipal charging stations, in 2021 an additional 20 public EV-CSs are coming, plus 20-24 municipal

fleet EV-SCs (grant depending) for a district leading total of 139 EV-CS, and not including those in private homes and workplaces, launch of the regional Bring it Home 4 Climate program, top-up incentives for home energy improvements, extensive energy upgrades at our municipal facilities, support for an additional 10 CoolIt! Climate Leadership Workshops to Saanich schools, the commencement of Resilient Saanich and many more.

A detailed Climate Report Card is to be presented to Council and in Q1 2021.

Housing Supply and Affordability

Saanich is addressing the crisis in housing supply and affordability. The data in our Housing Needs Report provided clarity on the scale of this problem. Based on households by tenure in 2016, the report notes some 23% of all households in Saanich spend 30% or more of their incomes on shelter costs, including 40% of renter households and 17% of owner households.

The report identifies clear deficiencies in housing options. Improved housing diversity is required by our seniors seeking to downsize so they may age gracefully in place in their own neighborhoods. Diversity in housing that is affordable is required for all. At a minimum the report confirms we require some 600 units/year over the next 5 years to accommodate these needs.

Council believes that our primary focus for housing in our centers, corridors and villages within the urban containment boundary is appropriate. Together with sensitive infill, and thoughtful housing innovations this will enable us to supply our housing needs and at the same time protect our agricultural lands and green spaces.

Actions are underway. Saanich recently enabled garden suites that provide new options for multigenerational housing diversity. Reducing pressure in the rental market, the occupancy of unrelated persons in rented single family homes increased from 4 to 6 individuals. We are seeing uptake of the recently enabled RS1 zoning for small lot (300 sqm) single family homes. We also see the growing inclusion of secondary suites as essential mortgage helpers in new single-family homes.

Previously completed work with the students and faculties at the University of Victoria and Camosun College and the British Columbia Union of Municipalities to lobby the Province helped bring forward new funding tools that enabled more on-campus housing across the province. At the University of Victoria, the 625 net-new on-campus housing units and student facilities are underway to arrive in 2022. Camosun College at Lansdown is also looking at new on-campus housing.

Shortly, staff will be bringing a proposal for a small apartment zone and small apartment infill policy to Council. The zone is designed for a single detached lot. It does not require land assembly. The zone is flexible on unit sizes. Proposals including micro units are anticipated. Small apartments may be up to three storeys and fall under Part 9 in the BC Building Code. This innovative approach provides a ground-oriented housing option for “edge” areas that is easier, quicker and less expensive to build than other forms of multi-unit residential development.

Both our Saanich wide Housing Strategy and Housing Task Force are underway. We appreciate the knowledgeable residents who have come forward to volunteer their time. Together these reports shall help inform our approaches to increase affordable housing, support diversity and supply, protect and promote rental housing and reduce barriers to housing. The taskforce report is anticipated in Q1 2021 and the strategy report in May.

At the local level, drafts for the new Cordova Bay and Cadboro Bay Local Area Plans provide policies in support of affordable housing, expanding the diversity of dwelling sizes and flexible housing options in their neighbourhoods. Density is primarily focused in village areas with sensitive infill in established neighbourhoods.

When considering the linkage between affordable housing and homelessness we appreciate that Saanich is host to the largest number of social and affordable housing units in the Capital Regional District. Based on 2016 data, Saanich has some 46,655 housing units. The nature of these households by tenure include 32,635 owners and 14,020 renters. Of these 5,681 are social and affordable housing units. These include co-op housing, supported housing and others. This represents 12% of our housing supply, or 1 in 8 of the homes in Saanich.

Meanwhile, more is being done. The Nigel Valley project is underway. On completion this will provide some 850 additional units across the full spectrum of supported, affordable and market housing. With good success, additional affordability appropriate to the standards of CMHC is being brought forward in new and current applications for multifamily housing. Separately, conversations with BC housing are ongoing to seek Saanich based solutions that may help address homelessness in the region.

In a closing note for this section, I am pleased to share with you more good news. I understand that we can hope to see the applications for some 600+ new rental housing units at University Heights and 300+ at Uptown be re-submitted for consideration early in the new year.

Resilient Saanich Technical Committee (RSTC)

Work is underway on the Environmental Policy Framework which integrates a Biodiversity Conservation Strategy, an enhanced Stewardship Program, and the recently released Saanich Climate Plan. The Resilient Saanich Technical Committee (RSTC) will advise on delivering the actions in the “Resilient Saanich” Terms of Reference. We appreciate the very knowledgeable individuals who came forward to volunteer their time.

Since mid-August, the committee has met monthly and are drafting Resilient Saanich goals and objectives for public feedback. The goals and objectives will be considered by Council and will serve to guide the process over the next two years.

Improved Child Care

The District of Saanich and five municipal partners (Oak Bay, Sidney, Highlands, Central Saanich and North Saanich) were awarded a joint UBCM grant of \$150,000 to conduct a child care inventory and gap analysis for the Peninsula. The outcome provided a report on child care spaces in our area, an understanding of the community’s need for additional spaces, and a description of obstacles that prevent the inventory from growing. It addressed four key areas: Bylaws & Policies, Partnership Development, New Space Creation and Advocacy, and provided 28 specific recommendations for achieving this.

Specifically, for Saanich, the report identifies a deficiency of 2,935 child care spaces. Of these some 354 are underway. The remaining gap of 2,581 spaces needs to be addressed. To resolve the strain felt by Saanich’s working families, action is needed in all quadrants to provide pathways to new child care facilities and affordable childcare rates.

Encouragingly, using the Provincial financing for new day care spaces, new facilities are being created by Saanich and School District 61. Plus, we see an encouraging number of new day-care facilities are included in applications for new multifamily or senior’s residences. These

collectively could provide over 500 spaces. Effectively addressing this issue requires thoughtful short, mid and long-term strategies and actions. In conversations with staff I look forward to bringing forward options for consideration by Council in Q1 2021.

Opioid Crisis, Addiction, Mental Health and Homelessness

The community crisis in opioid overdose deaths and addictions cannot be ignored. Recognizing the connections between the opioid crisis, mental health, addictions and homelessness, Council sent letters to the Federal and Provincial governments requesting they apply increased and appropriate financial and legislative resources for holistic solutions to this area of community concern. This action was strongly supported by the Saanich Police Board and the Saanich Police Department.

Working regionally during the recent provincial election, a parallel request was communicated to local candidates and party leaders in correspondence from the Mayors of the Capital Regional District. Working provincially, a similar request on mental health, substance use and treatment was presented to all candidates and party leaders by the BC Urban Mayors' Caucus, in our 2020 Blueprint for British Columbia's Urban Future.

In each case it was presented that this area is beyond the scope and the jurisdiction of municipal governments. Collectively, we must continue to call upon the federal and provincial governments to step up to their responsibility.

Road Safety Initiatives

An extensive series of road safety initiatives have been implemented across Saanich. Details can be found online. Here are four notable examples.

Partnering with ICBC in March, Saanich undertook a Traffic Operations and Safety Review of Prospect Lake Rd. The key recommendations have been implemented. A roadside barrier and single lane yield point is installed at Calvert Park. A speed reduction zone to 30km/hr from 50km/h between Estelline Rd. and Goward Rd. is implemented. A centreline rumble strip to discourage drivers from crossing the centreline is installed near Munn Road.

Culminating two years of work, Saanich Council is leading an ambitious regional initiative to pilot a reduced speed limit from 50km/hr to 40km/hr on residential roads (roads without a continuous yellow center line). The first of its kind in British Columbia, the pilot would research, test, and evaluate new regulatory approaches to matters not currently set out in the MVA framework.

The benefits of reducing default speed limits to 40km/hr on residential roads are many. They include reduced vehicle operating speeds, improving road safety measures for all users, and enhancing neighbourhood livability. We are hopeful the pilot will include the entire peninsula, and will be viewed favourably by the Province to be implemented next year.

Construction is underway on Phase I of the Shelbourne Street Improvement Project. This has focused on replacement of underground infrastructure. In 2021, Phase 2 construction will address continuous cycling facilities, pedestrian safety improvements, transit upgrades, and renewed asphalt road surfaces.

Saanich led the region with the installation of Pedestrian Head Starts at 6 traffic signals. An additional 9 locations will be included next year. These initiatives give pedestrians a head start before the light turns green and provide an all-ages friendly additional 'Walk' time to support slower pedestrians.

Diversity, equity and inclusion statement

Current social justice movements (Black Lives Matter, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, LGBTQ2+ Pride, etc.) are speaking to the systemic oppression of BIPOC and LGBTQ2+ people. At Council's direction, the Healthy Saanich Advisory Committee, working with community services, co-created an inclusion statement to acknowledge our rich diversity. Read aloud at our council and committee meetings, it actively affirms our commitment that "we see you, we hear you, and we are with you."

Responding to black community feedback, Council has corresponded on the issue of systemic racism in the adjudication of overseas qualifications of new Canadians with the office of the Prime Minister, our Premier and appropriate ministries.

Our police services are on the forefront of these conversations. On this, the Saanich Police Department has an existing body of work to help ensure the bringing forward of culturally informed, community-based services. Decades of work are in place with the Greater Victoria Diversity Action Committee, the Intercultural Association of Greater Victoria, the Victoria Native Friendship Center, the Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society and the African Heritage Association of Vancouver Island (AHAVI). I understand that our leadership of this work is being recognized by police departments across BC, Canada and the USA.

Locally, a testament of appreciation from members of our black community can be seen in the recent Meritorious Service Award by AHAVI to retired Staff Sgt. Scott Treble for his many years of outstanding service in this culturally sensitive space. It is also witnessed in the positive statements on our work on diversity inclusion from the ICA, VNFC and VIRCS in the Police Departments 2020 recruitment video. A broader example can be seen in the cultural diversity apparent in the membership of our advisory committees.

Since February, the Saanich Police Board and Police Department have included a direct focus on conversations with members of our black community. This includes co-supporting with the University of Victoria the regular meetings our black communities working group since March. A working paper from this group is expected imminently.

Aspirational Community Issues:

A number of innovative opportunities are being championed by our residents and stakeholder groups.

Included are community "Fields of Dreams" aspirations for a new multi-sports field playing complex at Spectrum School, an improved football field at Mount Douglas School, the acquisition of 22 hectares of forested green space on Mountain Rd., securing six acres of natural green space on Kings Rd. next to the Jubilee Hospital, a cricket pitch at Beckwith Park, an international grade "Pump Park", the opportunity for a Next Generation Performance Center for rowing at Elk and Beaver Lake which could increase options for multiusers facilities and lake health, finally dealing with the "dead boats" situation in Cadboro Bay, a multi-sports recreational facility in Cordova Bay, a noise attenuation wall at Falaise, livability improvements at Admirals road, a movie studio at Camosun College, and a hotel, entertainment, restaurant, casino complex in Saanich.

The University of Victoria working in partnership with the Saanich, Oak Bay and Victoria would like to establish a CIFAL as part of an initiative under the United Nations Institutes for Training and Research (UNITAR) Program. The CIFAL acronym stands for "International Training Centre for Authorities and Leaders" (French: Centre international de formation des autorités et leaders).

Each CIFAL Centre is a hub for capacity building and knowledge sharing between local and regional authorities, national governments, international organisations, the private sector, and civil society. It is an important resource in the United Nations long-term efforts towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The University is also interested in working together with municipal partners to secure funding from provincial and federal governments to develop Canada's leading Medical Technologies Discovery and Manufacturing Corridor. This could be created in a similar fashion to the Kitchener-Waterloo Software Innovation Corridor. Currently no one area of Canada has laid claim to being a leading region for MedTech.

The South Island has all the necessary elements including education and technology sectors with a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship. We would need to work together as one voice to promote the South Island Medtech Corridor as a key component of the economic recovery and medical capability of the region, the province and the country. A possible location for the initial stages of the Medtech corridor would be the Vancouver Island Technology Park.

Evolving from a District to a City

Recent confusion in conversations with the BC Urban Mayors Caucus, provincial, national and international bodies, the University of Victoria and others have raised the notion that perhaps it is time for Saanich to consider stepping up to evolve from a District to a City.

Apparent confusion exists amongst others on what exactly is the "District of Saanich" verses the "City" of Saanich. This uncertainty impacts opportunities for our residents and stakeholders now and in the future. For example, recently the BCUMC debated whether Saanich as a District actually qualified to be at the table with *Cities*. Similarly, identity uncertainty was evident in conversations when Saanich received BC's top "Open for Business Award."

Meanwhile our "District" is outperforming "Cities" on issues including leadership on climate change, the supply of supported housing, protecting green spaces for future generations, diversity and inclusion, financial management and much more. This raises questions such as what is a modern city? and how does a modern city meet its community's needs?

With some 124,000 residents Saanich is the eighth largest municipality in BC by population, and the second largest by land mass. Our 114 years of cultural and infrastructure development combined with our quality of urban, costal and rural geography causes some incorporated cities to stand in envy.

Municipalities arise from the legislation of our Province. A municipality's classification as a city, district, village or town is set at time of incorporation and becomes part of the common municipal identity. Langford, our neighbour to west became a city many years ago in its original incorporation.

Reclassification can occur when a municipality determines that a different status would better reflect its growth and development. Examples include the City of Maple Ridge (prior to 2014, the District of Maple Ridge) and the City of Delta (prior to 2017, the corporation of Delta). The recent reclassification process utilized by Delta covered straightforward statutory requirements and the process of obtaining elector approval.

In the minutes of its January 3, 2017 council meeting Delta cited identity difficulties in its rationale for evolving to a city status.

“Recognizing Delta as a local government continues to be challenging at times due inclusion of “The Corporation” in Deltas official name. A recent delegation to Rotterdam, Netherlands, highlighted this issue when Rotterdam officials mistakenly assumed the Corporation of Delta was a private business and had difficulty comprehending Delta as a local government.”

As we move forward in 2021 with our engagements on the pending Citizen’s Assembly we see the possibility that Saanich residents may be asked about the merging into the City of Victoria.

In this context, it would be interesting to understand the aspirations of 124,000 Saanich residents for our district to continue its own journey to improve and perhaps to evolve into the new “City of Saanich.” This process over our next year could be seen as an intriguing “tale of two cities”.

In conclusion

In this annual address, I hope you may see that your council and staff are working diligently together in these most challenging times to provide you with safe, effective and long-term services.

This Council is open to receiving your questions, concerns, and feedback. Productive and respectful public engagement is a corner stone of our decision-making processes. We need your input to help us to prioritize the initiatives that will make Saanich an even better community.

In closing, I would like to add my thanks to every member of Council. Elected just two years ago, this remarkable Council is comprised of a most dedicated, accomplished and hardworking set of nine incredible individuals.

Together they draw upon a uniquely diverse and rich set of backgrounds. They are each passionately involved in all the work they do on your behalf. It is my honor and personal privilege to work for you with each and every one of them

To my Council colleagues, Saanich staff, and our residents, I greatly look forward to continuing this collaborative work through the rest of our term.

Thank you.

Fred Haynes
Saanich Mayor