



District of Highlands Strategic Plan
2023 – 2026

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THE PURPOSE OF THIS PLAN

The strategic priorities set out in this document guide the work of the District for the next four years and articulate Council's focus and outcomes for the term. The Council Strategic Plan is guided by the Official Community Plan and the Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (ICSP) which provide the long term vision and path for Council's decision making.

The District's 2023-2026 Strategic Plan outlines the priorities for the Council term and projects the resource needs and planning required to complete the priorities within available resources and time.

Reviews will be conducted annually to ensure progress is being made, changing circumstances are responded to, opportunities are considered, and the financial implications of the strategic priorities are thoughtfully reviewed in conjunction with the District's annual and longer term financial planning process.

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WHERE ARE WE GOING?

DISTRICT OF HIGHLANDS OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN (OCP) VISION STATEMENT

The OCP vision statement describes the community’s aspirations for the future. It creates a picture of the future and answers the question, “Where does the community want the District to be in 10-20 years?” As noted in the current District of Highlands OCP, *“This OCP amendment incorporates and reflects the sustainability objectives and Descriptions of Success articulated in the ICSP. The result is clear direction toward sustainability that fits within the 2007 vision statement.”*

OCP Vision Statement:

The Highlands is a primarily residential community, rural in nature, and blessed with an exceptional abundance of scenic beauty, native plant and animal life, and public parkland. Those of us who live here place high value on the natural environment and our rural lifestyle. Highlanders are actively involved in the community, which fosters a spirit that is both self-reliant and cooperative.

The Highlands will strive to diversify its economy while preserving our natural systems, including the aquifers on which we depend so heavily. Land use decisions will be guided by a community plan, with the ongoing involvement of residents.

As stewards of our unique natural environment, we will protect its integrity. We will retain sufficient lands in their natural state to permit a diversity of plant and animal life to flourish and to ensure that the rural lifestyle we enjoy today can be experienced by future generations. We believe in the value of open and green space, trail systems, and outdoor recreational opportunities, both to enhance life in the Highlands and to contribute to the well-being of southern Vancouver Island as a whole.

We will provide for an adequate tax base, including light industrial, related commercial and nature-related recreational uses in some areas of the Highlands, in order to support basic, affordable municipal services and facilities. We will encourage alternative transportation choices, housing choices, and a community hall.

New development in the Highlands will be in keeping with the rural character of the community and carefully designed to protect sensitive environmental conditions. The pace of change should be gradual, and the type of development should leave a small footprint on the land.

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WHAT WE DO

DISTRICT OF HIGHLANDS MISSION STATEMENT

A mission statement describes the fundamental purpose of the organization. It answers the question, “Why does the organization exist?”

“The District of Highlands provides good governance, services, stewardship of public assets, and fosters the economic, social and environmental well-being of the community for current and future generations.” Based on the Community Charter sec. 7 Municipal Purposes



CORE SERVICES

Core services are the foundation of the work of the District and consume the vast majority (90% - 95%) of all the District's human and financial resources. The smooth delivery of these essential services generally goes unnoticed, but they are at the very heart of what the District does on behalf of citizens. The core services of the District include:

- Governance (Council);
- Administration and finance;
- Building and inspections;
- Bylaw enforcement;
- Fire services and emergency management;
- Planning and development;
- Transportation; and
- Facility and asset management.

This Strategic Plan does not detail the ongoing core work of the District but rather identifies those specific areas Council identified as key areas of focus for the 2023- 2026 term of office.



OVERARCHING GOALS AND PRIORITIES

COUNCIL IDENTIFIED FIVE OVERARCHING INTERCONNECTED GOALS FOR THE 2023-2026 STRATEGIC PLAN THAT GUIDE THE WORK OF THE ORGANIZATION

- ❖ **CLIMATE EMERGENCY, ADAPTATION & MITIGATION**
- ❖ **EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS, RESILIENCY & RECOVERY**
- ❖ **WATER RESOURCES & ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**
- ❖ **RURAL VALUES, PROTECTION & ENHANCEMENT**
- ❖ **COMMUNITY WELL-BEING**



2023-2026 TIMELINE, updated March 11, 2026

THE DISTRICT PRIORITIES FOR THE 2023-2026 COUNCIL TERM ARE SUMMARIZED IN THE FOLLOWING TIMELINE

* Priority	2023				2024				2025				2026				
	Quarter	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
South Highlands Local Area Plan Finalization/Adoption and Implementation – Motion 192-2025 on 2025 08 11		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Groundwater Protection Implementation and Work Plan – Staff report with program enhancement options in 2026 Q1					■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■				
Tree Bylaw Review – Staff report to generate Council discussion of models and direction in 2026 Q2									■	■	■	■	■	■			
Consider Zero Carbon Step Code – Staff report in 2026 Q2											■	■	■	■			
*Business License Bylaw – Motion 287-2025 on 2025 12 08														■	■	■	■

*Council Priorities = New Operational Work

■ Council Priorities	■ Information & Research	■ Implementation
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Completed Strategic Initiatives

Bring forward for Council information and consideration: 2002 Trails Master Plan & 2010 Roadside Trail and Cycle Network Plan – Motion 089-2025 on 2025 04 07
Revise Select Committee Terms of Reference - Motion 132-2025, 2025 05 05
Improve Communications – Staff Report <i>now implementation</i>
Community Hall Pergola Construction
Secondary Suites (Bylaw finalization) <i>now implementation including provincial housing legislation</i>
Organizational Structure and Capacity Review <i>now implementation</i>
Recreation Participation - Staff Report
High Level Development Application Fees Review – Staff Report
BC Energy Step Code Implementation
Facilities Management and Maintenance Program (all facilities)
Community Hall: Management (rentals); Landscaping
Emergency Program Strategic Plan Implementation
Asset Management Plan Implementation



INITIATIVES REQUIRING SCOPING & PARKING LOT

PARKING LOT INITIATIVES

There were several items that Council identified as being beyond the current capacity of the District but felt should be noted for future reference. These are:

- Natural asset management plan
- Improve road safety including options for traffic management
- Address and manage increased demands resulting from growth and visitors to Highlands (work with CRD Parks and Provincial Parks)