

DRAFT - DISTRICT OF SOOKE CED STRATEGY

Let's Talk Sooke version – please provide comments

DRAFT: September 28, 2021

INTRODUCTION

The District of Sooke has chosen to create a Community Economic Development (CED) Strategy, a holistic, integrated and people-oriented view of the economy as opposed to a more traditional profits-/money-first approach to the economy.

This is Sooke's first CED Strategy, and it will be a work in progress, to be further developed and modified in partnership with the whole community. The District and the community will review progress on the Strategy as time goes by and will continue to provide direction to the Strategy. It is believed that momentum will increase as we work towards the vision.

HOW WE GOT TO THIS STRATEGY (governance, engagement methods, other input and ideas)

The District of Sooke's 2019-2022 Strategic Plan includes goals and actions that seek to advance community economic development (taking into account social, economic and environmental aspects of the community) and action on climate change.

Council appointed a Community Economic Development Committee (CEDC) in 2021 to work towards that. In developing this CED Strategy, the CEDC and the District have used the following information and advice:

- Reviewed past engagements related to community economic development, including reports summarizing citizen input for the District's new Official Community Plan, the 2019 Economic Analysis conducted for the District, 2015 Workshop Report hosted by the Sooke Region Chamber of Commerce, and recent online conversations on Let's Talk Sooke.
- Presentations from local community members and groups about home-based businesses, and a thriving local economy.
- Presentations and information-sharing about partner organization's policy, programs and initiatives: the Government of BC, the South Island Prosperity Partnership, liaison with the District's Climate Action Committee, Low Carbon Resilience, Government of Canada (PacificCan), Capital Regional District, Tourism Vancouver Island, and more.
- A summer 2021 engagement that included:
 - Business Walk and telephone interviews

- Citizen survey
- Nonprofit organization survey and interviews.

Read the [Engagement Summary](#).

LOW CARBON RESILIENCE AND CLIMATE ACTION

As a result of the climate emergency, the District's community economic development Strategy is nested within climate action. The goals are broad, integrating social and environmental considerations into the development of the community economy. Actions are set out to ensure that integration as well.

In March 2021, the District adopted the Low Carbon Resilience (LCR) tool as a decision-making lens. This tool was developed by the Action on Climate Team (ACT) at Simon Fraser University. The tool encourages analysis of decisions and actions using a list of economic, social and environmental co-benefits to a decision. The CED Strategy includes these co-benefits with each of the goals, to show how the community will benefit as a result of taking action to achieve those goals. Read more about ACT, and [Low Carbon Resilience](#).

INTERSECTION WITH OTHER DISTRICT PLANS

Community Economic Development (CED) in Sooke cannot take place without the myriad of other plans and initiatives undertaken by the District government to serve citizens.

- Official Community Plan (OCP).
- Transportation Master Plan (TMP)
- Parks and Trails Master Plan (PTMP)

All of these plans work together, and all are developed to take action on climate change and to enhance the overall well-being of individuals and the community. The success of the CED Strategy differs somewhat though, in that its success depends on the community taking a role in implementing actions or contributing to actions at different times. The CED Strategy is a community plan, and while it has started out as a District-led initiative, it is hoped that the community will embrace it, and achieve it, and revisit to add future actions and initiatives to it.

CED STRATEGY DELIVERY

When the CED Strategy is adopted, there is an opportunity to look at different options for delivery of the Strategy.

The Canadian Community Economic Development Network suggests that change happens through approaches that are “Community-driven, community-led and asset-based.” Further that they “Engage and build the capacity of community members, primarily those who are most affected by decisions, to be agents for their own future”.

CED best practice would mean that Sooke’s CED Strategy is community-driven, and down the road, Council and the community should review options such as the establishment of a CED organization that would enable the work to be embedded in community.

VISION

Sooke’s community economy realizes environmental, social and economic co-benefits for all residents/citizens, is grounded in its vital partnership with the T’Sou-ke First Nation, and is diversified, resilient and adaptable.

STRATEGIC GOALS

The District of Sooke strives towards Low Carbon Resilience in its policy, actions and initiatives, and maximizes social, environmental and economic co-benefits for the well-being of the community, and all Sooke residents. Within that framework, the District’s goals for Community Economic Development are:

- 1. To attract new businesses and organizations that are Low Carbon Resilient. Definition of Low Carbon Resilient businesses are those that, to the greatest extent possible:**
 - **contribute to a circular economy,**
 - **protect natural resources and sinks,**
 - **provide protection from climate risks,**
 - **either compensate for their GHG emissions, or do not increase GHG emissions,**
 - **Identify social, environmental and economic co-benefits as part of the business vision.**

Co-benefits:



Strategies/Actions:

1.1 Using the new DRAFT OCP, and the climate action/LCR lens, encourage new investment and development on Employment Lands.

Action Number	Action Description	Timing
1.1.1	Develop RFP for Employment Lands Strategy (build on info from 2019 Economic Analysis and OCP review 2020/2021).	EARLY 2022
1.1.2	Apply to CanExport Community Investments (CECI) program to support Employment Lands Strategy	FALL 2022
1.1.3	Identify local inventory of space that could serve as co-working offices, and promote those spaces to the community.	EARLY 2022
1.1.4	Conduct a feasibility study for a co-working facility, including getting input from Sooke commuters and employers outside of Sooke.	FALL 2022 or WINTER 2023

1.2 Promote Sooke to investors/entrepreneurs.

Action Number	Action Description	Timing
1.2.1	Undertake a community branding initiative to develop a new community brand.	2023 OR 2024

1.2.2	Develop Sooke business/investment attraction promotions materials, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular updates of content for community profile – data and narrative • Webpage for District website • Tradeshow booth • Elected and senior officials toolkit (speaking points, backgrounders, ppt) • Content for BC/Canada/regional websites • Land and building inventory 	2022
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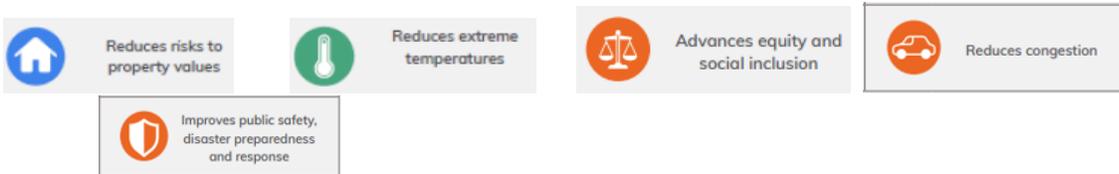
1.3 Develop a Business Hub/Incubator in Sooke.

Action Number	Action Description	Timing
1.3.1	Work with WorkLink to pilot a Business Hub in the new WorkLink building (planned for opening in 2022/2023)	2022/2023
1.3.2	Explore a District grant program for new green, LCR entrepreneurs to set up businesses in Sooke.	2022/2023
1.3.3	In moving towards a circular economy, pilot the collection of a used product that local waste removal businesses do not currently collect, but has value for re-use in the community.	TIMING 2022 or 2023
1.3.4	Host a Green Business Incubator Conference in Sooke to encourage innovation and LCR businesses to establish in Sooke	2023

2. To support existing businesses and organizations to grow, thrive and create jobs in Sooke.

Co-benefits:

 Avoids community damages and costs over time	 Diversifies local economy	 Enhances human health and well-being	 Limits tax increases
 Supports green job creation	 Improves air quality	 Improves community livability and vitality	 Enhances local autonomy



Strategies/Actions:

2.1 Facilitate new commercial/office space.

Action Number	Action Description	Timing
2.1.1	Meet with developers to present the CED Strategy, including the input provided by businesses, nonprofit organizations and citizens regarding what is needed in Sooke. (emphasizing the District’s climate action plan and OCP).	EARLY 2022 and ongoing
2.1.2	Using UBCM grant funding, review District permitting processes with the aim of improving processing times, enhancing transparency of processes and delivering service excellence.	Already underway

2.2 Encourage beautification, accessibility infrastructure and vitality of the town, including improvements to existing commercial space.

Action Number	Action Description	Timing
2.2.1	Meet with current commercial space owners to present the CED Strategy, including input provided by businesses and citizens. Collect information about commercial space and document what currently exists (e.g. energy type and use, materials, upgrades, etc)	EARLY 2022
2.2.2	Develop report with potential incentives and/or District policy mechanisms that would improve the look and	2022

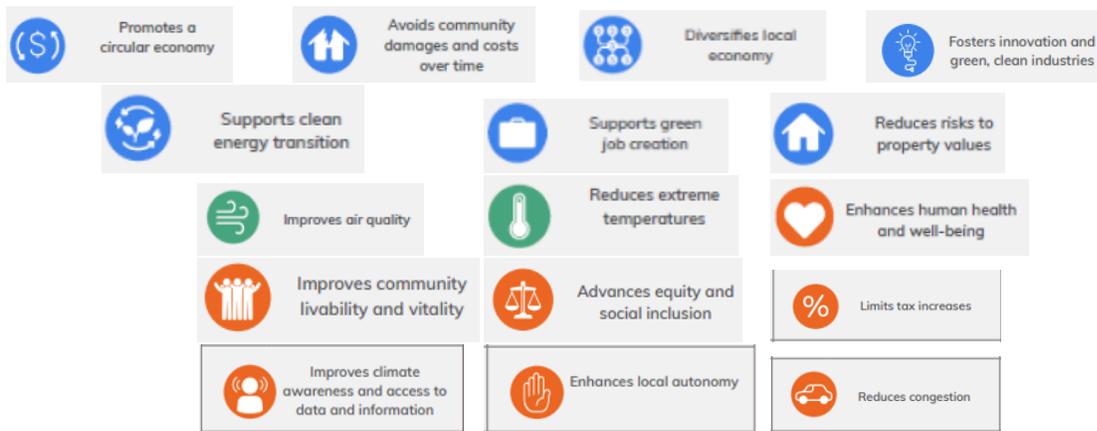
	functionality and Low Carbon Resilience of current commercial space.	
2.2.3	Set out and implement a Work Plan to refresh and improve common areas and high traffic areas with the assistance of community groups.	2022/2023

2.3 Attract more tourists to Sooke, with a focus on edu-tourism, eco-tourism, agri-tourism and marine tourism.

Action Number	Action Description	Timing
2.3.1	Complete the application to the Municipal and Regional Destination Tax (MRDT) program.	2021/2022
2.3.2	Work with BC Hydro on installing a Fast-charging station for EVs.	WORK UNDERWAY 2022/2023
2.3.3	Look into the possibility of a pilot project with Canada Border Services Agency to have a customs officer in Sooke at the government dock.	2022 or 2023
2.3.4	Commission a hotel and tourism study to identify the viability of attracting a major recreation-oriented land use which can serve as a catalyst for expanded hospitality, tourism, hotel and conference facility investment by the private sector. (Note: this is also part of the draft OCP)	2023

3. To augment opportunities for all Sooke residents to contribute to, participate in, and benefit from, a healthy community and Low Carbon Resilient economy.

Co-benefits:



Strategies/Actions:

3.1 Facilitate skills development and learning amongst community members.

Action Number	Action Description	Timing
3.1.1	Applying for funding, develop a Job Creation Partnership project that implements a labour force study of economic sectors and potential economic sectors in the community, skills in the community, and skills that need to be developed that will enable a trained workforce that will help attract new LCR businesses/industry.	MID-2022
3.1.2	Support training providers (e.g. regional trades programs, WorkLink) to offer training programs that will build needed skills within the Sooke population. In particular, there are new types of jobs related to home and commercial building energy retrofits, and this could be a focus.	LATE 2022/2023 and ONGOING.

- 3.2** Leverage social and environmental value in Sooke through the District’s commitment to social procurement.

Action Number	Action Description	Timing
3.2.1	Continue participation in the BC Social Procurement Initiative through implementation of a District Work Plan that increasingly incorporates social procurement into District operations	2022

- 3.3** Support circular economies, local financial resilience, and reduce economic leakage.

Action Number	Action Description	Timing
3.3.1	Prepare a staff report to the Community Economic Development and Council about finance programs that support circular economies and reduce economic leakage, with a focus on programs that will help enhance food, water and energy security in the District.	2022

OPERATIONAL GOALS

In support of the Strategic goals, the following operational goals are set out for the CED Strategy:

- 4. Select or create a data and measurement system to show progress on the Strategy.**

- 4.1 Establish up to 10 measures/indicators that use easily obtained data, and set a baseline in early 2022.

- 4.2 Collect local qualitative data through an annual Business Walk, a citizen's survey and interviews/survey of nonprofit organizations. {consider also: tourist survey}
- 4.3 Following 2 years of collecting data on the measures, set targets for the upcoming years.
- 4.4 Publish an Annual Report of implementation of the CED Strategy.

5. Communicate and engage with Sooke residents and Community Economic Development stakeholders for the following purposes:

- **Raise awareness of the CED Strategy, and how Low Carbon Resilience and Climate Action is intertwined with the local economy**
- **Gain input on the progress of the CED Strategy**
- **Collect new ideas for Community Economic Development**
- **Understand where there are gaps in the community economy, and create new strategies and actions that will help to fill them.**

- 5.1 Conduct an Annual Business Walk
- 5.2 Meet with nonprofit organizations about Community Economic Development annually at a minimum.
- 5.3 Publish a quarterly newsletter for a local audience about the CED efforts of the DoS and partners.
- 5.4 Write up local business success stories and include them as part of the tradeshow booth and website content.

FUTURE

The CED Strategy will be revisited, and may be revised based on the success of actions, and emerging needs and opportunities. The District invites community members and groups to be involved in the implementation and co-creation of this CED Strategy.