

## Social Equity Considerations – Companion to Bylaw 4373 Schedule A Official Community Plan for the Electoral Areas

### EQUITY CONSIDERATIONS

The following considerations are intended to guide and prompt Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD) staff and directors as Modernized Official Community Plan (MOCP) policies are implemented. These considerations are not exhaustive.

### GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

**Accessible information** | Any communication or educational materials should be adapted for different cultural groups and to avoid language barriers. Further, such communication materials should be accessible to those with vision or hearing impairments.

**Enforcement** | Ensure corrective measures and/or any enforcement relating to the Regional District's policies do not harm one group disproportionately.

**Explicitly support equity priority groups** | Without explicit consideration of the needs of equity priority groups in policy, disparities will continue. Upon implementation of all policies in the MOCP, the Regional District should prioritize policy approaches that directly benefit equity priority groups.

### MANAGE INFRASTRUCTURE RESPONSIBLY

**Water worldviews** | Water, wastewater and drainage are often perceived as neutral and technocratic policy topics. However, the dominant approach to water infrastructure is embedded within a Western worldview, which sees water as a resource to be managed. However, Indigenous worldviews see water as a living being with cultural, physical, spiritual and healing importance. Many Indigenous communities on Vancouver Island have ongoing water challenges, such as boil water advisories or no access to running water or sewage, which impacts health and well-being. Historical discrimination has consistently inhibited Indigenous communities' access to secure water and the ability to co-govern their resource. Although in many ways this issue is of federal and provincial jurisdiction, the CVRD can advocate for Indigenous water access and sovereignty. Healthy watersheds and groundwater are essential. Further, the infrastructure needs of rural dwellers who do not have access to servicing should be prioritized.

#### Sources:

Askew, H., Snelgrove, C., Wrightson, K. R., Couturier, D., Koebel, A., Nowlan, L., and Bakker, K. (2017). [Between law and action: assessing the state of knowledge on Indigenous law, UNDRIP and free, prior and informed consent with reference to fresh water resources](#). Vancouver: West Coast Environmental Law and UBC Program on Water Governance.

## COMPLETE COMMUNITIES

**Affordable housing** | Policies that support the retention of existing affordable housing, as well as the development of new housing, should be prioritized. In particular, affordable housing policies that specifically support equity-priority groups (i.e. lone parents, Black, Indigenous or People of Colour [BIPOC]) should be prioritized. During implementation of new affordable housing development, the CVRD should be careful to ensure new infill housing does not displace existing older stock of affordable homes. Further, implementation of all housing policies should consider various housing needs, such as transitional housing, larger homes for multigenerational families, proximity to services and access to green space.

**Public open space** | When implementing policy related to the provision and retention of public open space, Regional District staff and directors should first understand existing inequities in public space access. Where is there limited access to public open space in the Regional District, and how does this correlate with intersecting demographic variables such as income, race and gender? Public space design should evoke a sense of belonging for equity priority groups and should not employ 'hostile' designs (i.e. spikes to deter sitting, benches to deter sleeping, surfaces to deter skateboarding, etc.). Placemaking initiatives should centre Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC) voices. When hiring artists and designers for placemaking initiatives, ensure equity criteria is used to prioritize local equity-priority community groups/individuals.

**Heritage, culture, history** | Heritage preservation is a teaching tool, and a statement about local values. Since colonization, settlers have forcibly erased Indigenous heritage from the built environment. The contemporary dominant understanding of heritage typically emphasizes colonial values. Preservation of colonial character/heritage is often used as a tool to block affordable housing or other inclusive development from established neighbourhoods. The CVRD's definition of heritage should be inclusive of equity priority groups. Any policies relating to heritage and culture should centre the local Indigenous worldview, and the reclamation of places/intangible heritage elements connected to Indigenous history should be prioritized. During creation and implementation of heritage policies, the Regional District should partner with, and adequately compensate, local Indigenous and other equity-priority groups.

**Land use distribution** | Affordable housing should be clustered nearby transit and services, to ensure those who cannot afford a vehicle and/or expensive housing have access to their daily needs. Childcare facilities should be clustered nearby employment centres or co-located with schools. The buffering of land-uses is important for affordable housing projects, which are often located in least favourable locations.

Sources:

*Equity Guidance*, Developed by Jay Pitter, for the Canada Healthy Communities Initiative  
American Association of Planners, 2019. *Planning for Equity Policy Guide*.

## MOBILITY OPTIONS

**Service clusters** | Neighbourhoods with substantial transit access should have affordable housing to ensure lower-income individuals, who often rely on transit, can conveniently get around. Women and other equity-priority groups who rely on public transit typically take multiple trips at extended hours—clustering services nearby transit routes may help these users with daily needs.

**Inclusive electric modes** | Incentives for electric bikes and electric cars typically benefit the wealthy. Upon implementation, the CVRD should consider how policies regarding electric modes are accessible to lower-income individuals.

**Accessible for all abilities** | The prioritization of sustainable transportation runs the risk of adversely impacting those with mobility challenges. Accessible parking should be prioritized, as it is essential for those who cannot walk, bike or easily take transit. When designing trails and cycling routes, consider how such infrastructure can accommodate the needs of wheelchairs, electric scooters and those with vision or hearing impairments.

### Sources

- *Urban Systems Ltd, District of North Vancouver (January 2021). Targeted OCP Review: Social Equity Lens Paper.*
- *Perez, C. C. (2019). Invisible women: Exposing data bias in a world designed for men. Random House.*

## NATURAL ASSETS

**Indigenous land stewardship** | The knowledge and inputs of Indigenous groups—who have been stewards of the land for millennia—should be central to all natural asset management policy implementation. The CVRD can partner with and fairly compensate local Indigenous groups to help manage natural systems, landforms, airsheds and the marine environment. Decision making processes for a natural asset framework should centre inputs from equity seeking groups, especially Indigenous groups.

**Pollution reduction** | Equity-priority groups are often disproportionately impacted by inadequate environmental conditions including air, noise and light pollution. When reducing pollution, the Regional District should prioritize polluted areas where equity-priority groups live.

**Access to nature for all** | Green gentrification refers to processes started by the implementation of green space environmental planning agendas that lead to the exclusion of equity-priority residents. Environmental improvements tend to increase quality of life and property values, pricing out vulnerable residents and attracting wealthier ones. This contributes to the perpetuation of environmental injustice, which is also seen when hazardous areas are located near low-income neighbourhoods. During implementation of natural asset policies, such as tree canopy cover and protected environmental areas, the Regional District must ensure such policies do not negatively impact equity-priority groups.

### Sources

Haase, Dagmar, et al. "Greening cities—To be socially inclusive? About the alleged paradox of society and ecology in cities." *Habitat International* 64 (2017): 41-48.

## FOOD & AGRICULTURE

**Affordable, accessible, culturally appropriate food** | Upon implementation, the Regional District should consider how its policies regarding food production and consumption supports food security for all. How can such policies ensure that equity priority groups have convenient access to affordable, culturally appropriate food? How might Regional District policies support culturally diverse food production practices? How might implementation actions help ensure local food products remain affordable?

**Housing for farm labourers** | Farm workers, who are frequently immigrants, lower-income and/or from racialized communities, often face poor living conditions. COVID-19 highlighted the poor conditions many immigrant farmers experience across the country. There is potential for more policies to support the needs of immigrant/seasonal farm workers.

**Non-agricultural development** | With regard to any policies that discourage non-agricultural development on agricultural land, consider the unintended consequences of such policy. Could non-agricultural development on agricultural land benefit equity-seeking groups (i.e. economic development or housing opportunities for Indigenous people; multi-generational housing for farming families; housing options for farm workers, etc.).

## REGIONAL PROSPERITY

**Support local** | Consider how the implementation of economic policy can support local initiatives and community organizations.

**Economic innovation for all** | All too often, incentives for economic innovation benefit the wealthy. Consider how the implementation of economic innovation policies can benefit all members of the community.

**Home based businesses in all housing forms** | If this is not already the case, the CVRD should explore allowing home-based businesses in all housing forms, not only single-detached ones.

**COVID-19 Recovery** | COVID-19 has had a devastating economic impact on a large portion of society—primarily care and service workers, who are disproportionately women and/or racialized individuals. Those working in already precarious conditions (shift work, contract work, etc.) have faced amplified uncertainty and hardship since spring 2020. Policies in the MOCP should be implemented with this reality at the forefront of decision making.

## CLIMATE CRISIS

**Efficient and affordable** | Many climate mitigation efforts run the risk of benefiting the wealthy only. When implementing policies that increase energy efficiency in buildings, consider how affordability can be maintained. Actions that increase efficiency while also maintaining affordability should be prioritized. For example, putting individual water metres in affordable housing units allows residents to track their water usage, allowing them to save money on their utility bill and consume less water.

**Indigenous knowledge** | The CVRD should partner with, and adequately compensate, local Indigenous groups to understand traditional forest management practices and other climate mitigation practices.

**Emergency management** | Marginalized populations are often located in precarious places that may require climate mitigation measures. The CVRD should conduct research to understand the correlation between hazardous areas and lower income neighbourhoods. Mitigation efforts should be prioritized in these areas.

**Just transition** | Policies that support energy transitions away from fossil fuels should be considerate of equity priority groups. How might a transition towards vehicle electrification be accessible to lower-income individuals? How might lower-income individuals be supported in the transition off of wood burning fireplaces?