

10.0 Natural Environment

10.1 CONTEXT

View Royal comprises a diverse array of marine, freshwater, and terrestrial ecosystems and habitats, as shown on Map 11. Marine ecosystems comprise of Esquimalt Harbour and Portage Inlet, including their coastal shorelines. Freshwater ecosystems merge with the salt waters of these two water bodies in the estuaries of Craigflower, Hospital, and Millstream Creeks. Thetis, Prior, Pike, and McKenzie Lakes all comprise freshwater ecosystems that include foreshore and riparian areas. Terrestrial ecosystems exist throughout the Town, though are particularly prevalent in Thetis Lake and Mill Hill Regional Parks, in the form of mature Coastal Douglas Fir forests along with rocky outcrops and Garry Oak meadows. These natural spaces provide important habitat for wildlife and species at risk (see Map 12).

In addition to providing habitat for many species, the natural environment also poses some natural hazards such as flooding, tsunamis, steep slopes exceeding 30%, and wildfires. These hazards all pose risks to public safety and potential impacts to the built environment. Construction activities occurring within any zones where the risk to public safety is deemed high as a result of a natural hazard is subject to Development Permit Area Guidelines included in Part 5 of this OCP. This includes restrictions on development in areas where slopes are equal to or greater than 30% and flooding or instability due to a tsunami. Steep slopes and the tsunami inundation zone areas are shown on Maps 13 and 14, respectively. This section discusses considerations and strategies for emergency response to events occurring as a result of such natural hazards, plus wildfires and earthquakes.



Access to the natural environment is a key priority for the View Royal community. Overall health and well-being may be correlated with the level of access that community members have to the natural environment, whether that be through public green space or on privately-owned lands. This section aims to work in tandem with sections 12 and 13 of the OCP to recognize that protection of the natural environment as places for people to recreate, both passively and actively, will positively impact the physical and mental health of residents. Many natural features and habitats shown on Maps 11 and 12 are designated as parkland on Map 15.

It is also important to note the key role that trees play in protecting the natural environment, mitigating the impacts of climate change, and improving overall community health and well-being. Many studies discuss the benefits that trees can provide for both physical and mental health, in terms of their ability to provide shade, clean air, and connection to the natural environment. Areas of high tree canopy coverage may also act as corridors connecting wildlife habitat areas. The Town's Urban Forest Strategy endorsed by Council in 2026 aims to recognize the important of trees in View Royal through establishing a tree canopy coverage goal of 30%. This section aims to further support the vision of the strategy and recognize the role of the urban forest in protecting the natural environment.



The following objectives and policies outline how View Royal can strengthen the long-term resilience of the Town's natural environment and reduce community risk from natural hazards. Together, they support protection from flooding, tsunamis, landslides, wildfires, and earthquakes, while safeguarding environmentally sensitive areas, urban forests, and aquatic environments from potential impacts of development.

The following OCP Goals may be achieved through the policy direction provided in this section:

Environmentally sensitive areas are ecosystems and/or habitats that provide high value to the natural environment through their ability to support biodiversity, animal and plant species, and natural systems such as purifying the air and water. View Royal has a number of sensitive and significant terrestrial, aquatic, and riparian ecosystems that provide habitat for many species. Examples include:

- **Terrestrial ecosystems:** old growth and mature forests such as those found in Thetis Lake and Mill Hill Regional Parks
- **Aquatic ecosystems:** saltwater habitats provided in large waterbodies and their shorelines such as the Portage Inlet
- **Riparian ecosystems:** freshwater streams and lakes that have the potential to support fish habitat, such as Craigflower Creek and Thetis Lake

- Natural Amenities
- Community Well-Being
- Community Safety & Security
- Climate Action and Resilience
- Reconciliation
- Regional Partnerships
- Sustainable Service Delivery and Asset Management

ESQUIMALT HARBOUR

DISTRICT OF HIGHLANDS

CITY OF LANGFORD

CITY OF COLWOOD

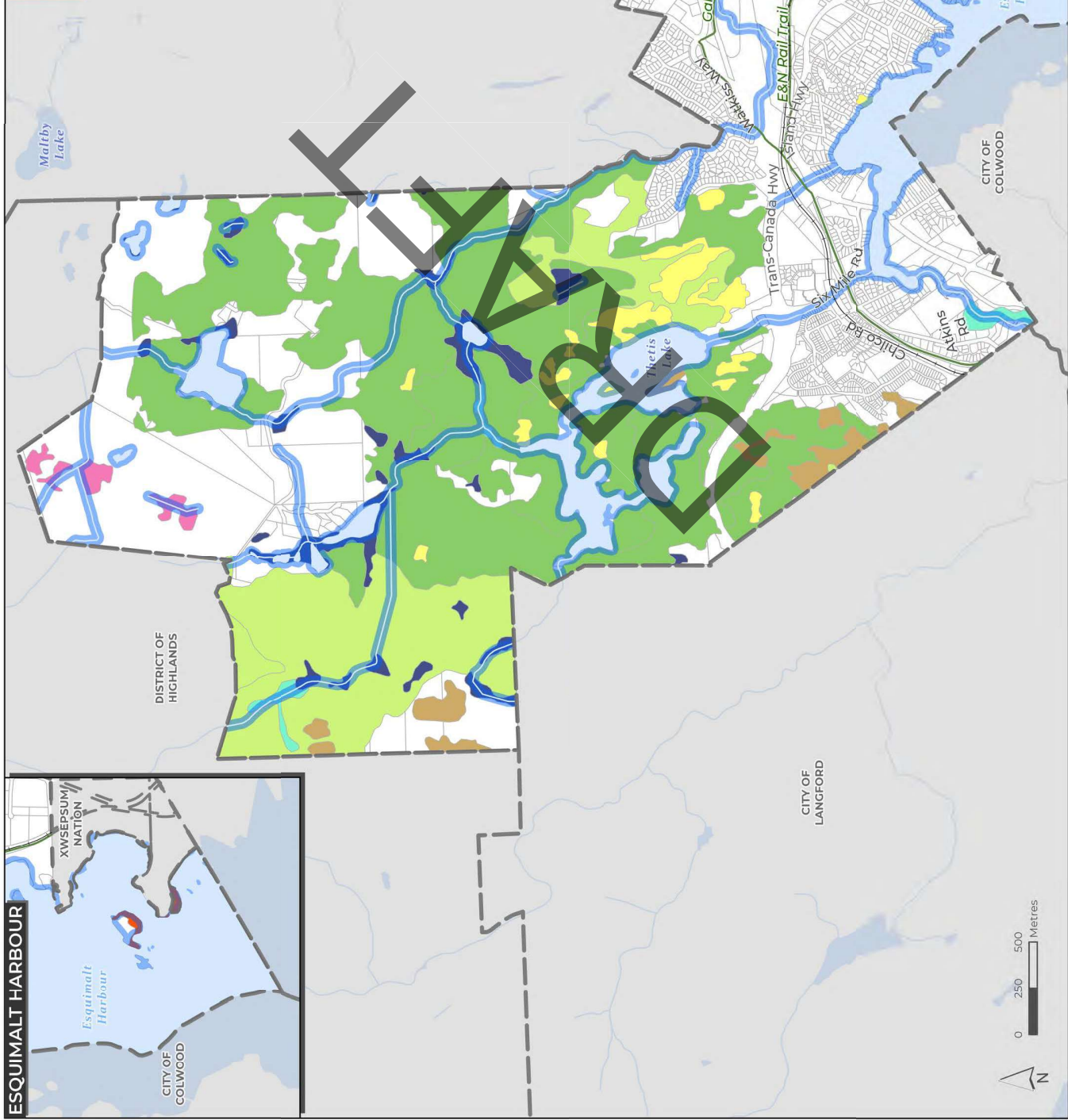
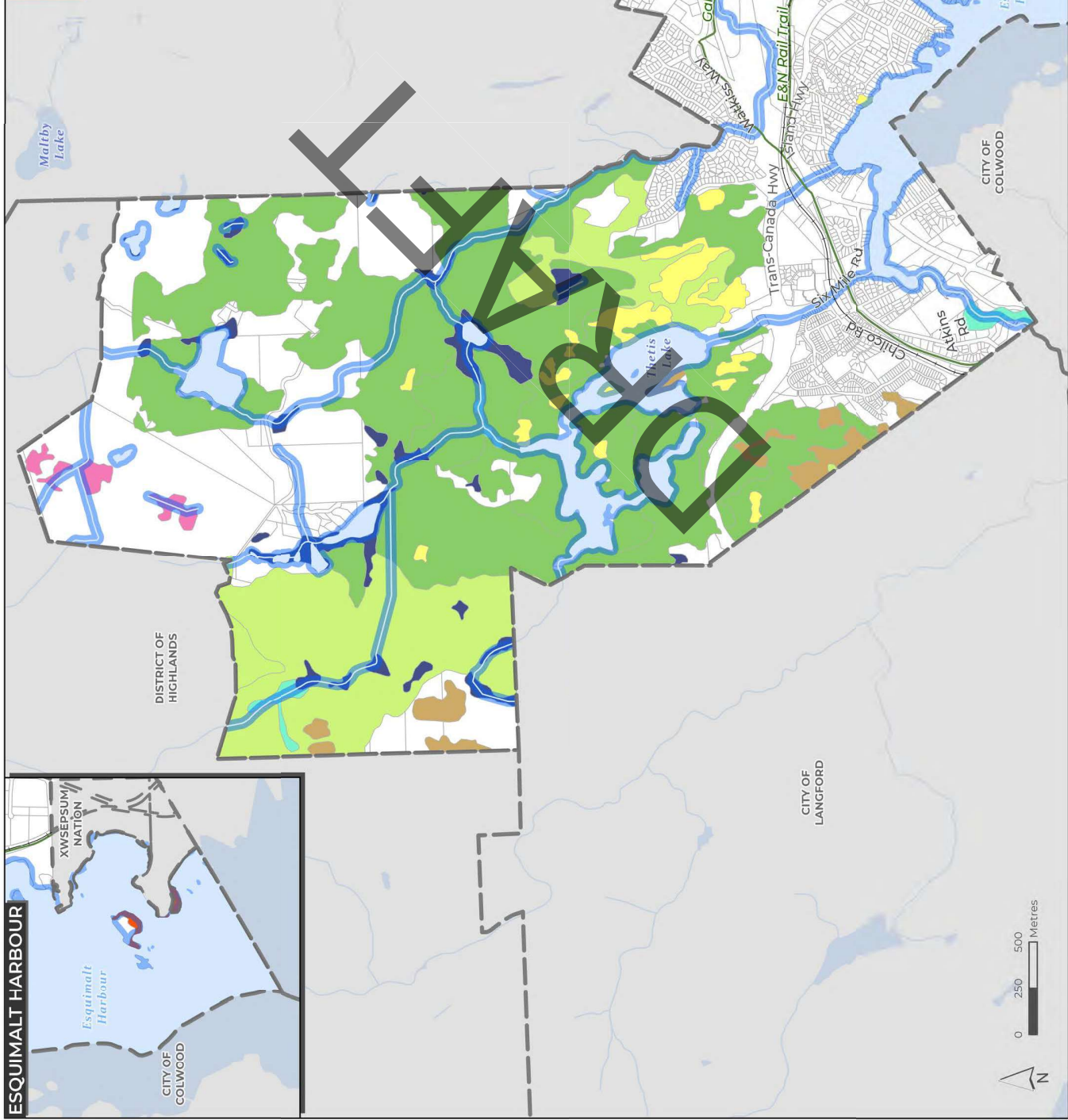
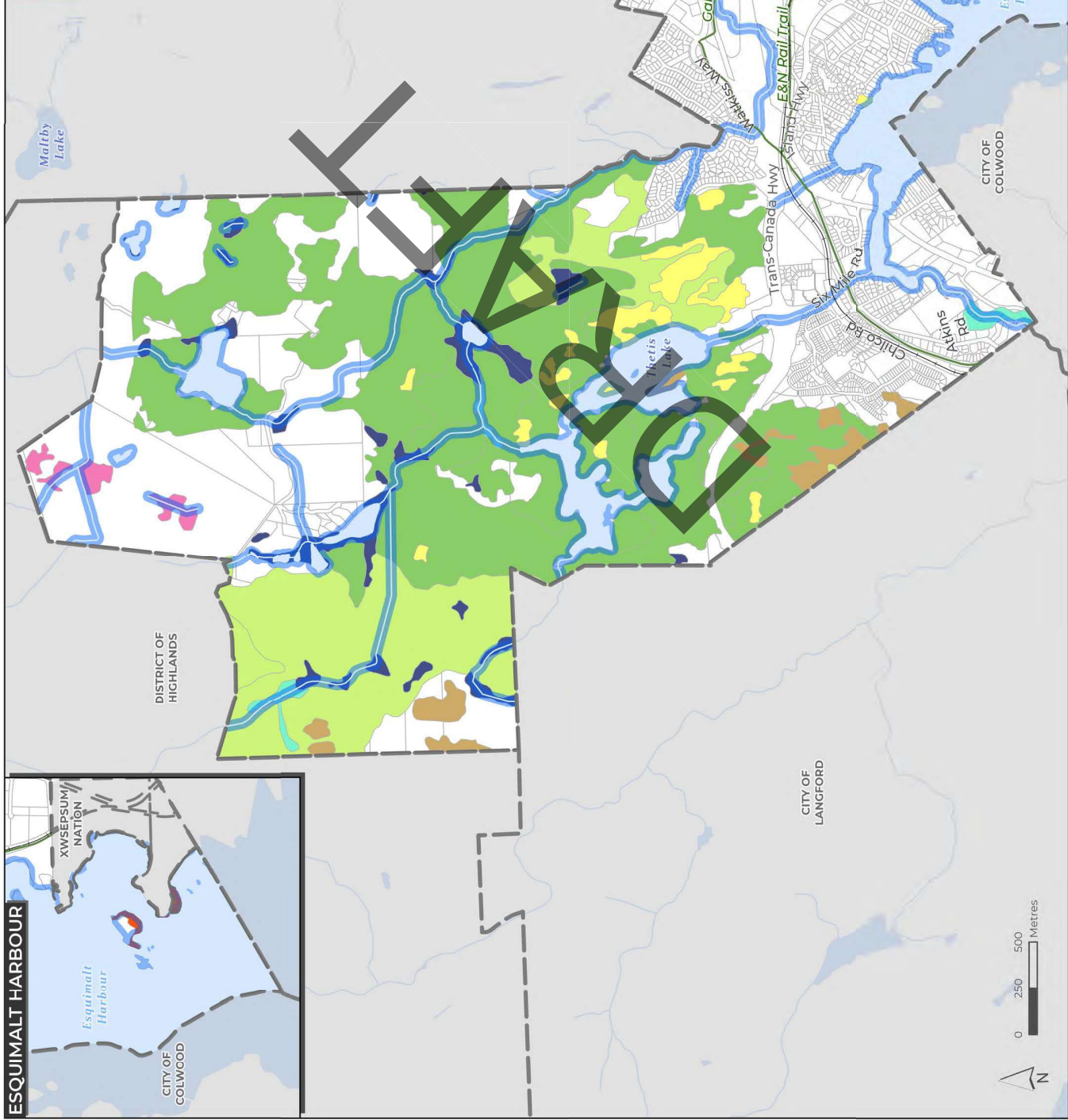
Legend:

- Green: Forested Land
- Yellow: Agricultural Land
- Orange: Urban Land
- Brown: Industrial Land
- White: Open Land
- Blue: Water
- Pink: Wetlands

Scale: 0 250 500 Metres

North Arrow: N

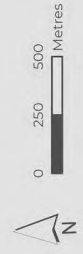
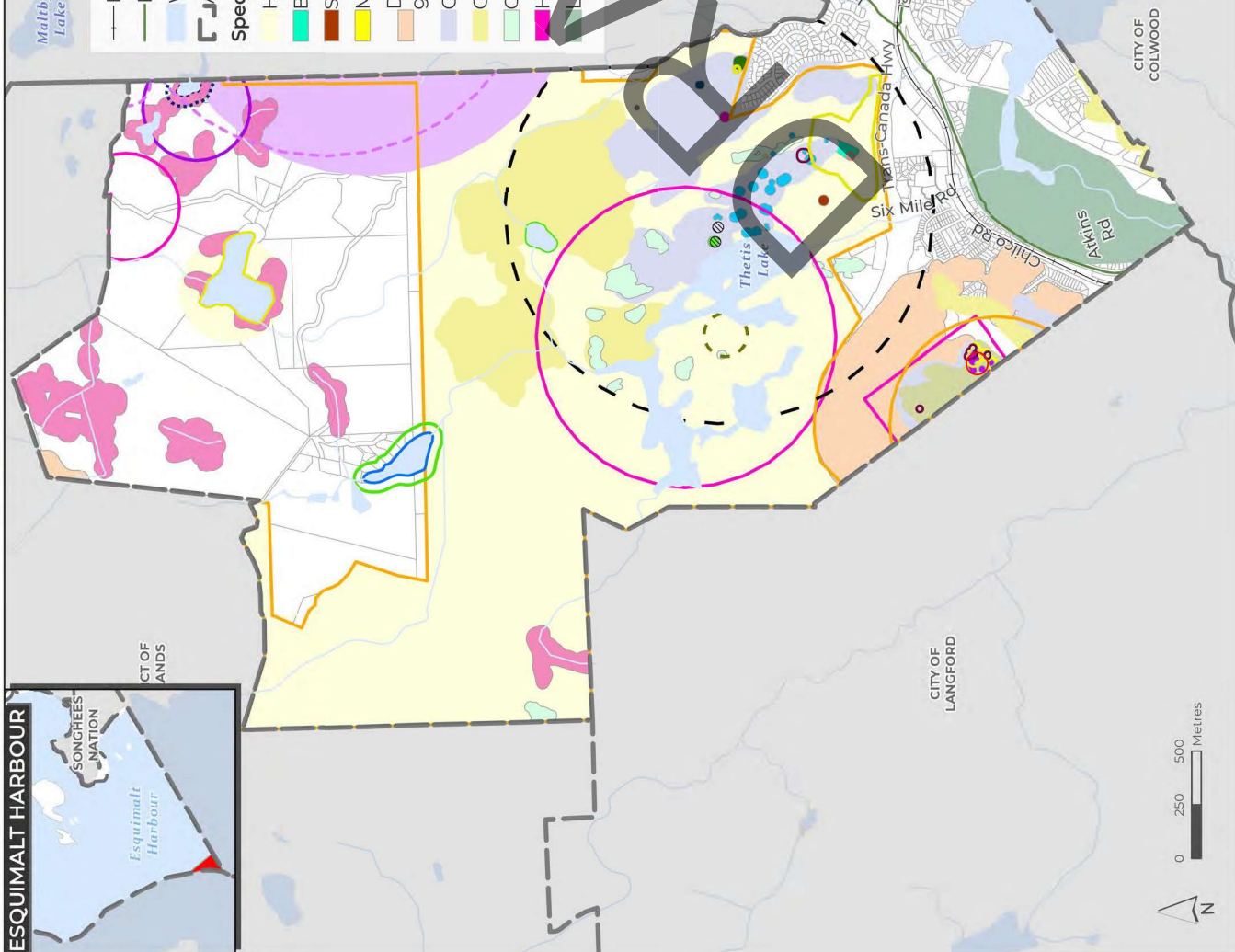
Inset Map: Shows the location of Esquimalt Harbour within the larger context of the region, including the Xwsepsum Nation and the City of Colwood.



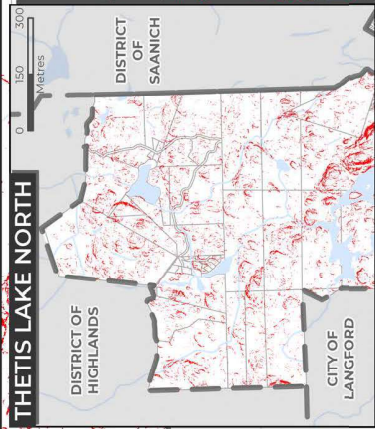


Mulhby Lake

- E&N Rail Corridor
 — Regional Multi-Use Trails
 Waterbodies
 Administrative Boundaries
Species at Risk Habitats
 Howell's Violet
 Blue-grey Taildropper
 Slimleaf Onion
 Macoun's Meadow-foam
 Douglas-fir / Dull Oregon-grape
 Garry Oak / California brome
 Grand Fir / Dull Oregon-grape
 Garry Oak / Oceanspray
 Howell's Tritelia
 Lobbs Water-buttercup
- Surf Scoter
 White-top Aster
 Western Redcedar / Vanilla-leaf
 Brook Spike-primrose
 Deltoid Balsamroot
 Dense Spike-primrose
 Fern-leaved Desert-parsley
 Near Navarretia
 Three-way Sedge Marsh
 Trembling Aspen / Pacific Crab Apple / Slough Sedge
 Poverty Clover
 White Meconella
 Threaded Vertigo
 Wine-cup Clarkia
- Moss' Elfin, mossil subspecies
 Propertius Duskywing
 Purple Sanicle
 Slender Popcornflower
 Rough-leaved Aster
 Northern Red-legged Frog
 Common Sharp-tailed Snake
 Painted Turtle - Pacific Coast population
 Dun Skipper
 Great Blue Heron, fannini subspecies
 Western Screech-Owl, kennicottii subspecies
 Common Ringlet, insulana subspecies
 Purple Martin

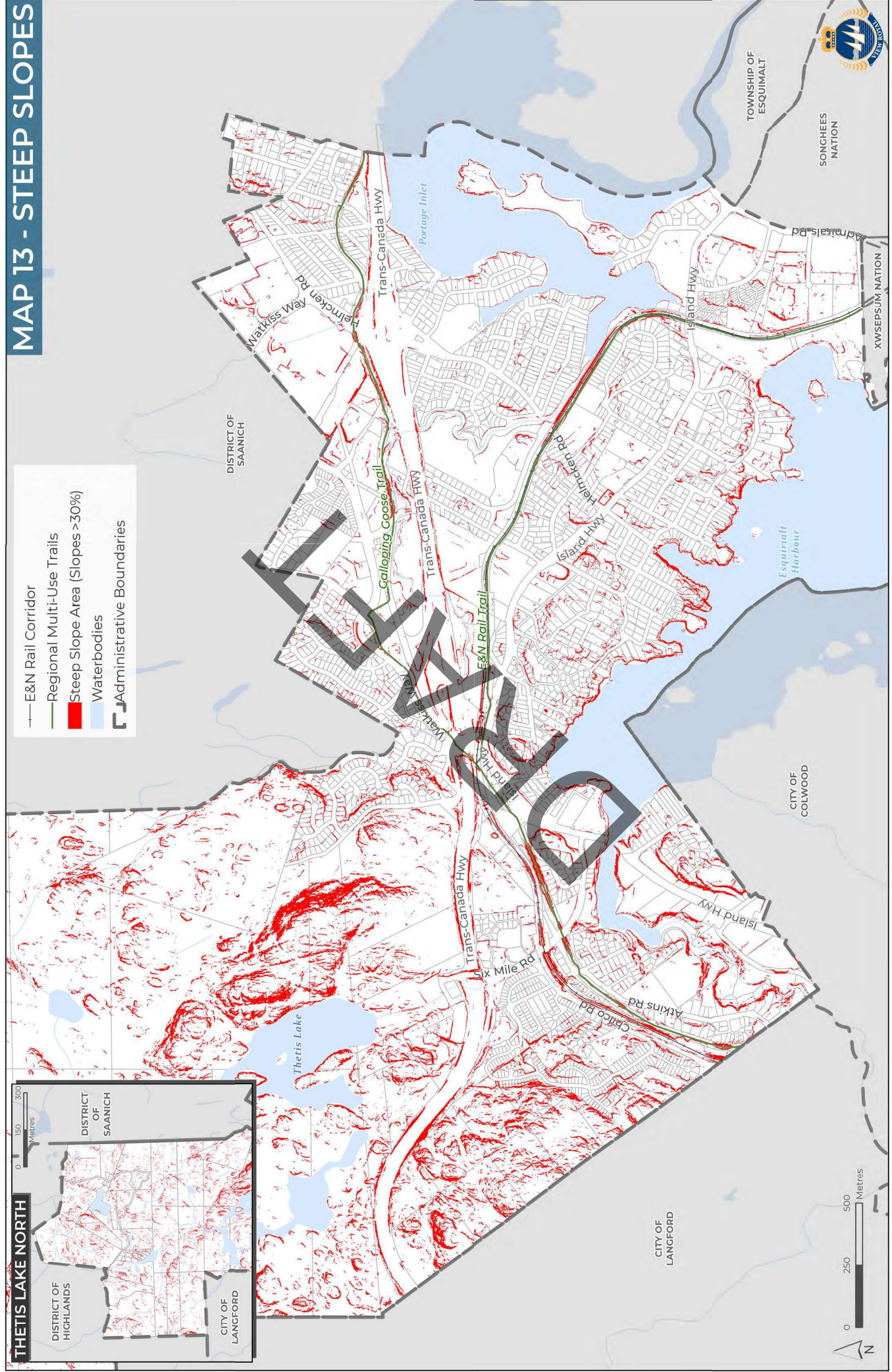


THETIS LAKE NORTH



- E&N Rail Corridor
- Regional Multi-Use Trails
- Steep Slope Area (Slopes > 30%)
- Waterbodies
- Administrative Boundaries

MAP 13 - STEEP SLOPES



Map 14: Tsunami Hazard Zones

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10.2 OBJECTIVES

10.2.1 BALANCED GROWTH AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION

Continue to find balance between development opportunities and protecting the Town's distinct natural beauty to ensure these valued natural assets are thoughtfully maintained.

10.2.2 PUBLIC SAFETY AND HAZARDS

Mitigate public safety risks associated with natural hazards, including flooding, tsunamis, landslides, wildfires, and earthquakes.

10.2.3 TERRESTRIAL AREAS, NATURAL SHORELINES AND WATERCOURSES

Protect sensitive terrestrial areas, watercourses, and shorelines to preserve their long-term ecological and hydrological functions and continue to recognize their contributions toward overall community health, recreation, and climate resilience.

10.2.4 URBAN FORESTS

Identify, protect, and enhance the Town's urban forest and tree canopy to support ecological functions, biodiversity, climate resilience, community health, and economic growth.

10.2.5 FIRST NATIONS KNOWLEDGE AND HISTORY

Integrate First Nations knowledge and perspectives into environmental planning by working in partnership with the Songhees and Xwsepsem Nations.

10.3 POLICIES

10.3.1 GENERAL

- A. Encourage residents, businesses, schools, and community groups to get involved in conserving the health of the natural environment. Community-based initiatives such as the following are encouraged:
 - i) Habitat restoration and monitoring
 - ii) Construction of community gardens
 - iii) Habitat clean-up days
 - iv) Tree planting programs
- B. Continue to collaborate with the federal and provincial governments, the Capital Regional District, other municipalities, Songhees and Xwsepsem Nations, schools, and local organizations to strengthen local and regional resilience against natural hazards, conduct community engagement and public education related to emergency management, and develop and distribute environmental conservation and community stewardship information to the public.

10.3.2 ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND RESTORATION

- A. Protect and conserve the long-term health and sustainability of important terrestrial, aquatic, and riparian ecosystems, species of concern, and environmentally sensitive areas (see Maps 11 and 12). Protection and conservation strategies may include:
 - i) Development Permit Area designations.
 - ii) Park land acquisition at the time of subdivision or rezoning.
 - iii) Application of Section 219 covenants to prohibit development.
- B. Prioritize land acquisitions and/or dedications over section 219 covenants to conserve, protect, and restore natural areas for the future.
- C. Consider the management of natural assets that provide municipal services through the Town's Asset Management Program.
- D. Advocate for the management of natural assets, such as natural green space and watercourses, within the Town's boundaries that provide non-municipal services.
- E. Continue to identify, review, and designate environmentally sensitive areas as Development Permit Areas in Part 5 to ensure that these lands are adequately protected from new development.
- F. Support adaptive ecosystem management, evidence-based decision making, and the procurement of current information and datasets to inform ecosystem and urban forest management in View Royal.
- G. Ensure the protection of aquatic habitat, riparian ecosystems and shorelines. Protection and conservation strategies should be in accordance with the current *Riparian Area Protection Regulation*.
- H. Limit resource extraction, agriculture, and related uses north of Thetis Lake Regional Park and ensure that any resource extraction activity does not threaten the long-term integrity of the natural environment.
- I. Pursue a collaborative approach to environmental conservation and management by partnering with the federal and provincial governments, the Capital Regional District, Songhees and Xwsepsem Nations, and local organizations to protect and enhance the natural environment in View Royal.
- J. Explore opportunities to limit pet access and activities that have detrimental impacts on environmentally sensitive areas.
- K. Consider opportunities to manage resident access to Environmentally Sensitive Areas and natural areas by providing defined access opportunities that protect native vegetation and do not harm the health of ecosystems.

- L. Consider opportunities to reduce or ban the use of pesticides, herbicides, and other toxins like microplastics.
- M. Explore opportunities to undertake further studies and research to identify initiatives that can contribute to enhancing air quality in the community (i.e., prohibiting woodburning stoves), while also supporting the Town's goal of net zero greenhouse gas emissions.

10.3.3 HABITAT PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT

- A. Identify opportunities to establish new, and protect existing, wildlife corridors that facilitate the movement of wildlife and greater biodiversity across View Royal through the pursuit of a wildlife corridor study.
- B. Acknowledge the role of trees within the road right of way in providing habitat for species and acting as wildlife corridors.
- C. Continue to protect, restore and enhance habitats and ecosystems that support migratory, rare and endangered species, and species at risk as shown on Map 12, and address threats to biodiversity, such as invasive species, disease, and climate change.
- D. Strive to enhance wildlife habitat areas (e.g. in-stream works, new habitat creation) by considering proposals from applicants for new development on a lot where a habitat exists and a net benefit to the habitat can be demonstrated through completion of a Qualified Environmental Professional.



- E. Protect the integrity of watersheds and riparian areas to preserve biodiversity, support healthy habitats, and mitigate flood risk.

10.3.4 WATERSHEDS

- A. Work collaboratively with the Capital Regional District, neighbouring municipalities, Songhees and Xwsepsem Nations, and other organizations to protect and enhance local and regional watersheds and the Capital Regional District Gorge Waterway Initiative.
- B. Support the implementation of the Capital Regional District's watershed plans for Millstream Creek, Hospital Creek, and Craigflower Creek.
- C. Identify opportunities to daylight channeled watercourses and culverts, where possible.

10.3.5 URBAN FOREST

- A. Pursue the protection and enhancement of View Royal's urban forest in alignment with the Urban Forest Strategy.
- B. Continue to identify, explore, and understand the role of the Town's urban forest, and its relationship with the Town's parks, urban spaces, active transportation network, and open spaces.
- C. Continue to identify and explore the complex role that the Town's urban forest has in ecology, the natural environment and its many systems, climate change mitigation, the economy, and the community's well-being and health.
- D. Continue to build, enhance, and increase the Town's urban forest, to achieve a 30% canopy coverage target for the Town by 2045, in alignment with the Town's Urban Forest Strategy.
- E. Consider opportunities to protect and retain trees that are affected by development, where possible, and explore the possibility of relocating affected trees, or undertake alternative methods of development and construction.
- F. Support and encourage the protection of trees that contribute to the Town's natural and cultural heritage through implementation of the Urban Forest Strategy and the Tree Protection Bylaw.

- G. Enhance the pedestrian transit service experience by prioritizing the installation of new boulevard trees and identify opportunities to protect existing trees within 400 m of a prescribed frequent transit stop, along highways, and arterial and collector roads in the Town.

10.3.6 VEGETATION AND LANDSCAPING

- A. Protect existing and plant new climate adaptive native plants and trees in alignment with the Tree Protection Bylaw, the Urban Forest Strategy, and Development Permit Area Guidelines through the pursuit of educational programs, incentives, and regulations.
- B. Actively promote the removal of invasive vegetation and species to restore natural habitats.
- C. Consider opportunities to plant climate adaptive native plants and trees on municipal lands. Exceptions may be allowed for seasonal projects, such as hanging baskets and targeted annual gardens.
- D. Consider establishing landscaping standards for public and private lands that considers current and anticipated climate stresses that may impact the viability of certain vegetation and tree species.



10.3.7 NATURAL HAZARDS RISK MITIGATION AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE PRACTICES

- A. Continue to designate lands susceptible to natural hazards (wildfire, tsunamis, floods, steep slopes greater than 30%), such as those shown on Maps 13 and 14, as Development Permit Areas to protect the public and development from potential threats to safety.
- B. Integrate FireSmart principles into Town policies, regulations, and practices wherever possible and applicable.
- C. Review and consider opportunities to implement recommendations from the Community Wildfire Resiliency Plan.
- D. Continue to assess, monitor and educate on vegetation structure ignition, and where possible, continue to reduce risk to homes within the community.
- E. Consider opportunities to improve urban resilience to wildfire threats through programming, educational opportunities, and adaptive design.
- F. Prioritize emergency access and egress routes to areas within the community and ensure they are properly maintained in the event of a natural hazard such as flooding, tsunami, landslide, wildfire, or earthquake.
- G. Consider the provincial Flood Hazard Area Land Use Management Guidelines in the preparation of land use planning policies, regulations, and bylaws and for subdivision and development in flood-prone areas.
- H. When considering land use and planning decisions where a concentration of high-value or high population density uses are proposed or exist, consider a 2.0 m global sea level rise (approximately 200 years) relative to the year 2000 sea level.
- I. Protect public safety from risks posed by development on steep slopes and in or near flood hazard areas identified on Maps 13 and 14.
- J. Explore opportunities to identify flood-prone areas as special planning areas with tailored flood plain construction levels, policies for risk mitigation, infrastructure adaptation and emergency preparedness.
- K. Promote climate-resilient development by encouraging elevation of structures, use of flood-resistant materials, and incorporation of green infrastructure.
- L. Support managed retreat or land use transition in areas where long-term flood risk is incompatible with continued development.
- M. Support the identification and mapping of community assets and infrastructure that are susceptible to natural hazards, including municipally-owned buildings, roads, and bridges. Explore options to enhance the resilience of these assets and infrastructure to mitigate possible negative effects.

- N. Collaborate with the Capital Regional District, Province, Crown Corporations (i.e., BC Hydro), and private service providers (Fortis BC, Telus, Shaw, etc) that provide or operate key infrastructure in the Town, such as roads, communications, gas, electricity, to identify and map the location of these assets, to be able to identify and understand the risks from natural hazards. Key stakeholders include the Capital Regional District, Ministry of Transportation and Transit, BC Hydro, and Fortis BC, Telus, and Shaw.
- O. Continue to promote and educate residents on the use of West Shore Alert to notify residents of natural hazards such as flooding, tsunamis, landslides, wildfires, earthquakes, and major storm events.

11.0 Climate Action and Sustainability

11.1 CONTEXT

The impacts of climate change are evident in View Royal through previously unprecedented events that are occurring more frequently, such as poor air quality due to wildfire smoke, extreme heat, and rising sea levels. These impacts underscore the need for proactive adaptation and mitigation. As a signatory to the BC Climate Action Charter, the Town is committed to becoming a carbon-neutral and climate-resilient community.

View Royal can contribute significantly to adapting and mitigating the effects of climate change. Municipal decisions regarding land use, development, transportation, infrastructure, and waste management significantly impact greenhouse gas emissions and working to reduce emissions. Additional key actions include supporting the construction of green buildings, supporting the shift to low-carbon heating systems (e.g. heat pumps), and encouraging building retrofits that support lower energy consumption.

Climate change is intertwined with all aspects of a community, making it a prominent theme throughout this OCP. This section outlines the objectives and policies that guide View Royal's efforts in climate change adaptation, mitigation, awareness, and sustainability.

The following OCP Goals may be achieved through the policy direction provided in this section:

- Community Safety & Security
- Climate Action and Resilience
- Regional Partnerships