# **Connect North Saanich: Winter 2021**

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COVID-19 is still with us and is reluctant to let go. South Island residents have responded well over the last year; however, the late 2020 increase in positive cases shows that we have a shared responsibility to follow guidelines and regulations. News of a vaccine provides some comfort as we head into 2021.

Most, if not all, of the retail, commercial, service, transportation, hospitality and food sector

businesses continue to be negatively impacted. These local businesses are the lifeblood of the Peninsula. They are doing their best to adapt but still need our collective support. Think local – Shop local.

The second wave of positive cases prompted additional operational changes in response to Health Orders. Staff and Council now participate in a daily health check before entering municipal buildings. We are strongly encouraged to participate in meetings virtually. The staff work from home policy has been reactivated.

Council strives to find the balance between advancing District business, while considering the limited opportunity for in-person public participation. Our modified correspondence procedures have worked well. We have also provided additional time for public comment on certain initiatives.

North Saanich received \$2.7M as part of the COVID-19 Safe Restart Funding announced late in 2020. Council will be considering how to allocate the funds as part of the 2021 Budget process. Council unanimously approved an immediate \$50,000 allocation to the Saanich Peninsula Lions Food Bank.

We have just completed our annual advisory commission appointments and are pleased to report that 15 residents applied to serve in a volunteer capacity. The total number of volunteers is approximately 30. Thank you to everyone who is willing to serve and to those who have completed their terms.

Council held a successful virtual community meeting on October 7, 2020. We will host another virtual meeting on Wednesday, February 17, 2021. Zoom details will be posted at northsaanich.ca/community-meetings

This newsletter also provides an update on current or completed projects, including the Official Community Plan review, Tree Protection Bylaw review, Active Transportation plan, Scoter Trail and Sandown.

We hope that the modified Christmas holiday season still enabled you to stay connected with family and friends and create new traditions, joyful memories, and make the best of an unusual and challenging period. The prolonged pandemic has increased stress and led to diminished mental health.

Fortunately, North Saanich has numerous opportunities to enjoy nature and improve our mental health: a trail walk through the forest, a visit to a local or regional park, or a walk along the ocean near a beach access. Take care of yourself and each other.

# Outdoor **Burning**

# **Burn Smart, Burn Clean**

Outdoor burning has been allowed in North Saanich for many years as a way to manage excess green waste. However, there is a growing awareness about the impact of the smoke from outdoor burning on human health, particularly for children, the elderly, and people with preexisting health conditions.

You can help by choosing alternatives to burning. If you must burn, burn smart & clean.

## **Burn Better**

If you are going to burn, please reduce the smoke from fires by:

- · Burning on good venting days only. The B.C. venting index can be found online.
- · Burn hot. Ensure the fire has adequate oxygen.
- Burn dry material. Do not burn leaves, green grass, construction waste or household items.



northsaanich.ca/outdoor-burning



# **Alternatives To Burning**







# Projects in **Active Engagement**



# **Active Transportation Plan**

The North Saanich Active Transportation Plan is nearing completion. The work to date has been shaped by a combination of technical analysis and your feedback from last summer.

#### It includes:

- A review of existing conditions, public perspectives from the first engagement session, and a gap analysis
- Vision and accompanying goals and objectives
- Design recommendations for new facilities appropriate to North Saanich, and specific options to improve active transportation

It's now time to hear from you again. We are looking for your feedback on the overall vision and goals, your support for each specific option, and how you would prioritize them.

Find out more and complete the survey:



connectnorthsaanich.ca/active-transportation-plan

# Let's Talk Budget

Should the District add new amenities to parks? Do you think the resourcing for bylaw enforcement is appropriate? How satisfied are you with the level of communication from the District?

These are just a few of the questions that we have for you as we develop the 2021 District budget. Your feedback will help shape funding priorities, service levels and property tax rates.

Find out more about how the budget is developed, the budget cycle, how tax dollars are allocated and **fill out the survey** on the project page.



connectnorthsaanich.ca/2021-budget

### About The North Saanich Budget

The District has traditionally provided only those services which are most important to the community and supplemented revenues from user fees and charges to lessen the burden on the limited property tax base. As a result, the District levies lower property taxes than most other municipalities in the region.

In 2020, as a result of COVID-19, the District reduced the overall tax increase to 1.44% (from 2.88%). This cut the residential tax increase in half resulting in an average increase of \$21. The business tax increase was reduced to an average of \$175. The District also deferred the water infrastructure tax increase to 2021.

# We want to hear from you!

## **Official Community Plan Review**

Thank you to everyone who participated in the first round of engagement! Whether you dropped by one of our eight pop-up events or participated online on Connect North Saanich, we appreciated your input and enthusiasm for your community.

## By The Numbers

- 168 people attended 8 outdoor pop-up events
- 248 people participated in at least one of the engagement tools on Connect North Saanich

You can view the feedback and emerging themes on the project page.

Through this first phase, we heard a range of opinions and differing views about the future of the District. Going forward, discussions will focus on policy options and trade-offs for the community—what may change in the future and what may fundamentally remain the same. Everyone will have the opportunity to share their perspective and to help shape the values and solutions as we continue to develop a plan for the future.



#### What's Up Next?

In February, we will be kick-starting engagement for Phase 2 of the Official Community Plan (OCP) Review Process.

Building on the findings from our background research and what we heard from you in Phase 1, we are now ready to explore the community's vision, goals and high level policy ideas to make it all happen.



## How Can You Get Involved?

There are a variety of meaningful ways for you to get involved online in this phase. We have seen high participation rates in the online engagement in North Saanich. However, if you are unable to participate online, please call us for a printed version of the survey, community conversations package or to get more information from a planner.

We look forward to getting together in-person in future phases of the review (subject to health guidance).

#### Opportunities to Have Your Say

**Emerging Themes Web Panels (week of February 1):** Three web panels with the project team will explore the key trends, challenges and opportunities in:

- · Healthy communities, housing and affordability
- · Climate action and natural systems
- · Agriculture and the local economy

**Community Conversations (March):** Host your own conversations on the OCP with your friends, neighbours and others in your networks either online or in-person in a COVID-safe way (if allowed). We provide guidebooks, materials and all the other things you'll need to host a rich discussion.

**Online Survey (March):** Have your say on the emerging themes and high-level policy ideas through an online survey.

**Project Updates:** Sign up for regular updates by clicking on "Stay Informed" on the project page.



connectnorthsaanich.ca/ocp

## **Tree Protection Bylaw Review**

#### What's It About?

The District initiated work in September to review and update its Tree Protection Bylaw. The bylaw, which has not changed since it was adopted in 2002, regulates the cutting, removal or damaging of trees on private property.



#### **Current Status**

As part of the first project phase, we engaged the community online in November and December 2020 to gain a better understanding of concerns and aspirations for tree protection on private property in North Saanich.

## By The Numbers

- 219 people participated in the engagement tools including the survey
- 26 participants at four technical workshops

#### **Next Steps**

An engagement report and best practices report will be presented to Council in March 2021 with recommended key directions for the bylaw update. The second phase of engagement will take place in the spring of 2021 to get your input on the draft updated Tree Protection Bylaw. You can subscribe for updates on the project page by selecting "Stay Informed."



connectnorthsaanich.ca/tree-bylaw

# Completed **Projects**



# **Scoter Trail Restoration Project**

The north section of Scoter Trail from Munro Road to the Tseycum First Nation lands has been rehabilitated and is now open to the public.

The upgrade involved preservation of the natural shoreline, restoration of the trail and installation of a pebble beach, making the trail walkable at all tides. The improvements also enhance the natural shoreline by allowing logs to wash onto the beach and plants to establish.

Retaining as many trees as possible was also a priority. Benches and a seating area have also been installed along the trail.

The project came in on time and under budget.



northsaanich.ca/scoter-trail

### Sandown Lands

In December 2020, the District and the Circular Farm and Food Society signed a lease agreement for long-term operation of the Sandown Agricultural Lands. Under the 10-year agreement, Circular Farm will provide a range of programming and services on the Sandown Lands including:

- Community gardens
- $\bullet \ \mathsf{Farmpreneur} \ \mathsf{Supported} \ \mathsf{Incubator} \ \mathsf{Plot} \ \mathsf{program}, \ \mathsf{to} \ \mathsf{support} \ \mathsf{emerging} \ \mathsf{farmers}$
- · Water and soil sampling
- Showcase for soil regeneration using managed intensive pasture grazing
- · Host workshops, events and programs

The District will provide funding to Circular Farm for the first three years:

- 2020 \$135,000
- 2021 \$125,000
- 2022 \$125,000



northsaanich.ca/sandown

# Sandown Centre for Regenerative Agriculture By Circular Farms

In the weeks leading up to Christmas, the Circular Farm and Food Society was delighted to sign the final agreement with the District and take on management of the beautiful 83 acres of arable land, wetland and forest that we call the Sandown Centre for Regenerative Agriculture.

The Society envisions Sandown as an 'agricultural hub' for the municipality, with activities that foster teaching, learning and research in our local food system; support and encourage emerging and existing farmers; strive for best practices in land and and reflect our Society's commitment to reconciliation and relationship building in

our Farmpreneur program. This "supported incubator plot" program is developed to support emerging farmers by providing access to land, shared amenities, and an inspiring range of mentorship from leading farmers, chefs, packagers, agri-tourism and business experts in the region.



The promotional window for the Farmpreneur program was a short 3 weeks, and the resulting number and quality of submissions clearly confirmed: the demand and the need for this kind of program is

2021: installing deer fencing and irrigation, welcoming our first Farmpreneur cohort, and offering courses for the public. There are opportunities to grow your own food,

steward an ivy-covered forest patch, take tours, connect with the farmers, and fall

Sign up for the mailing list and stay current



www.sandowncentre.com

# Reminders

### **Snow Removal**

The District has over 140 km of road to maintain and keep safe and passable. In the event of a snowstorm, we prioritize our snow clearing efforts as follows:

- · First Priority: major and emergency routes, hills and curves
- Second Priority: secondary and connector roads
- Third Priority: residential streets and cul-de-sacs

\*Private roads and driveways are not cleared by the District

Please do your part by:

- · Clearing walkways around your property
- Avoiding parking on roads (which can prevent them from being cleared)
- Checking on and assisting your neighbours

# • Check your emergency kit to ensure you have

**Winter Storm Readiness** 

- enough supplies to last one week
- Stay away from downed hydro lines as they can be re-energized without any advance notice
- Have your vehicle fitted with winter tires: they perform better in cooler weather and are required by law on some highways

## **2021 Assessment Notices**

2021 BC Assessments have been released. BC Assessment is responsible for all property assessments in British Columbia. Questions about your property assessment?



bcassessment.ca

# **Stay Connected**

Stay in the loop with what's happening at the District by:

- Signing up for news and public notices: northsaanich.ca/notifications
- Signing up for project updates: visit connectnorthsaanich.ca, select the project, click on "Stay Informed"



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