

HOUSTON, GRANISLE, AND TOPLEY RURAL OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN

BYLAW NO. 2112, 2026

SCHEDULE "A"



Please note that this document (Schedule "A") is one of four parts of the Official Community Plan. This Plan also includes the Land Use Designation Map (Schedule "B"), Ecological, Wildlife Values Map (Schedule "C), and Recreation Values Map (Schedule D). The maps can be viewed at the Regional District office. If you wish to obtain a paper copy of a map, large format copying charges apply. The maps are also available on the Regional District's website at: www.rdbn.bc.ca.

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1. INTRODUCTION



Photo: CN Rail Line East of Houston

1.1 Purpose

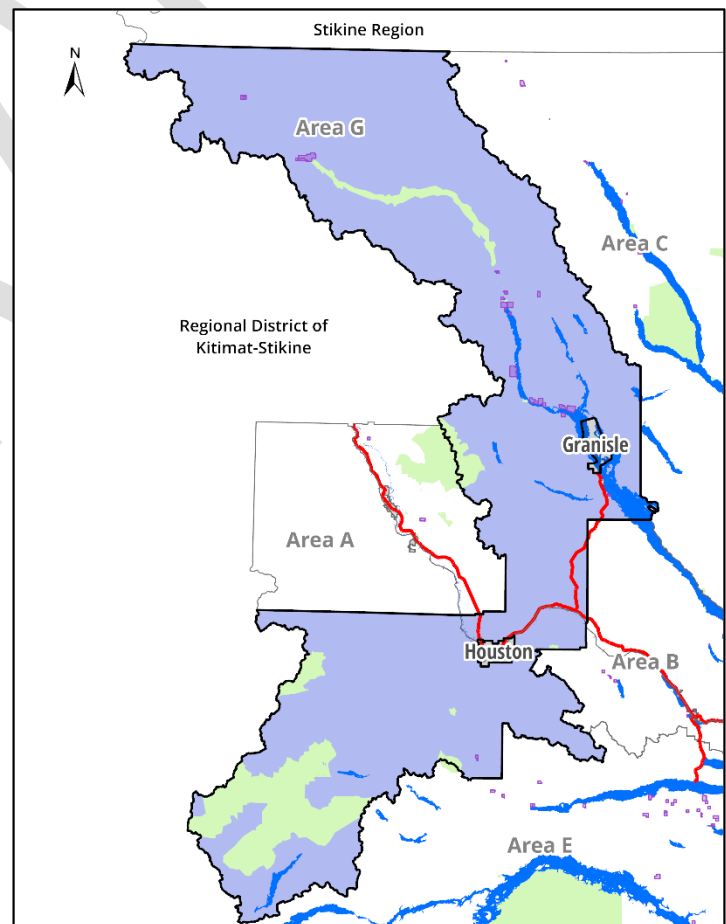
The *Houston, Granisle, and Topley Rural Official Community Plan* is a bylaw which is adopted by the Board of Directors of the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako. The Plan is for Electoral Area G (Houston/Granisle Rural) which is shown on Map No. 1 below.

The *Houston, Granisle, and Topley Rural Official Community Plan* endeavours to identify the rural communities' aspirations with respect to land use and development. In doing so, the Plan contains goals, objectives and policies which describe the form and character of existing and proposed land uses in the Plan area. By considering and adhering to these statements, development will take place in a manner consistent with the physical, economic, and social vision of the Plan area.

The Plan is not a land use, subdivision, or development regulation. Regulations are set out in the zoning bylaw and other bylaws. The Plan contains the communities' vision for the future, and states how the Plan Area communities aim to reach that vision. The Plan is intended to be used to provide direction regarding planning and development within the Houston, Topley, and Granisle rural areas by the public, the Board of Directors, Regional District staff, and provincial agencies.

It is intended that all amendments to Regional District land use and development bylaws are consistent with the intent and direction provided by the policies in the Plan.

Map No. 1: Electoral Area G (Houston/Granisle Rural)



1.2 Plan Area Profile

Electoral Area G is characterized by a stunning array of lakes and mountains as well as extensive wilderness recreation opportunities. It is diverse area with a low population density concentrated in areas, such as Topley, Topley Landing, Smithers Landing, Perow, and around the District of Houston. The area is known for its industry, outdoor recreation opportunities and high quality of living. It has world-class salmon and steelhead fishing and an abundance of other outdoor recreation opportunities such as hunting, hiking and bird watching. There are several resorts and wilderness retreats as well as many rustic campgrounds.

The area contains the municipalities of Houston and Granisle, and unincorporated communities at Topley and Topley Landing. Binche Whut'en, Cheslatta Carrier Nation, Gitxsan Huwilp Government, Gitanmaax Band, Kispiox Band, Haisla Nation, Kitselas First Nation, Kwadacha Nation, Lake Babine Nation, Nee Tahi Buhn, the Office of the Wet'suwet'en, Wet'suwet'en First Nation, Skin Tye Nation, Stelat'en First Nation, Takla Nation, and Yekooche First Nation identify traditional territory within Electoral Area G.

According to the Statistics Canada Census for 2021, the population of Electoral Area G declined by 7.4 per cent from 903 to 836 persons between the years 2016 to 2021. This reflects a longer-term downward trend in area population.

POPULATION	2006	2011	2016	2021
District of Houston	3,163	3,140	2,993	3,052
Village of Granisle	364	295	303	337
Electoral Area G (Houston/Granisle Rural)	1,059	975	903	836
Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako	38,243	39,208	37,896	37,737

Source: Statistics Canada Census Profiles 2006-2021

On Reserve population data is compiled separately by *Statistics Canada Census* and is provided below for Reserves that have census populations. All the populated reserves in the plan area are part of Lake Babine Nation.

ON RESERVE POPULATION	2006	2011	2016	2021
Nedo'ats (Old Fort / Nedoats 11 and 13)	5	0	0	0
Tachet (Babine 25)	105	81	112	83
Wit'at (Fort Babine / Babine 16)	78	98	86	75

Source: Statistics Canada Census Profiles 2006-2021

The municipality of Houston is the service, entertainment, and business centre of Electoral Area G and was established as a tie-cutting centre for the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway in the early 1900s. According to the Statistics Canada Census for 2021 the population of Houston increased by 2.0 per cent from 2,993 to 3,052 persons between the years 2016 to 2021. It is noted that the last national census took place prior to the Canfor sawmill closure in Houston.

The municipality of Granisle is an important residential, commercial and recreational centre within Electoral Area G. It was originally founded to house the families of miners working in the nearby copper mines and incorporated in 1971. According to the Statistics Canada Census for 2021 the population of Granisle increased by 11.2 per cent from 303 to 337 persons between the years 2016 to 2021.

With the change in mining operations in Granisle decades ago, Granisle has become a community with a high retiree population. In 2021, more than 45 per cent of residents were 65 years of age or older (RDBN Granisle and Surrounding Community Profile). As of 2021, Public Administration was the largest employment sector in Granisle, employing more than 25 per cent of residents (RDBN Granisle and Surrounding Community Profile).

Traditionally the forest industry dominated the local economy of Area G. The Canfor and Houston Forest Products mills in Houston were among the largest in the province until their closures in 2013 and 2023, respectively. Despite the downturn, there remain value added wood products manufacturing operations in Houston, and the Dungate and Babine Lake Community Forests are active, with the latter expanding in 2011.

Huckleberry Mines, an open pit copper mine 125 kilometres south of Houston, operated from 1997 to 2016 and permanently closed in 2021. Electoral Area G remains a region rich in mineral resources and in 2025 exploratory drilling for diamonds, silver, and gold in the region were continuing to take place (Imperial Metals News Release, Nov 11, 2025).

According to the Statistics Canada Census for 2021 the labour force for Electoral Area G consists of 735 persons. Occupation type refers to the type of work performed, regardless of specific industry. Based on a 25 per cent sampling, employment is broken down by occupation type as follows.

- 26.7% - trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations
- 19.8% - sales and service
- 11.6% - manufacturing and utilities
- 7.0% - business, finance, and administration
- 19.8% - natural resources, agriculture, and related production occupations
- 0% - legislative and senior management occupations
- 2.3% - health occupations
- 5.8% - natural and applied sciences
- 4.7% - education, law, and social, community and government services
- 0% - art, culture, recreation and sport

Employment industry refers to the broader sector of the economy that employs workers. The agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting industries are responsible for 25.6 per cent of employment in the area, followed by manufacturing industries at 12.8 per cent and health care and social assistance industries at 8.1 per cent.

1.3 First Nations with Reserves and Interests in Plan Area

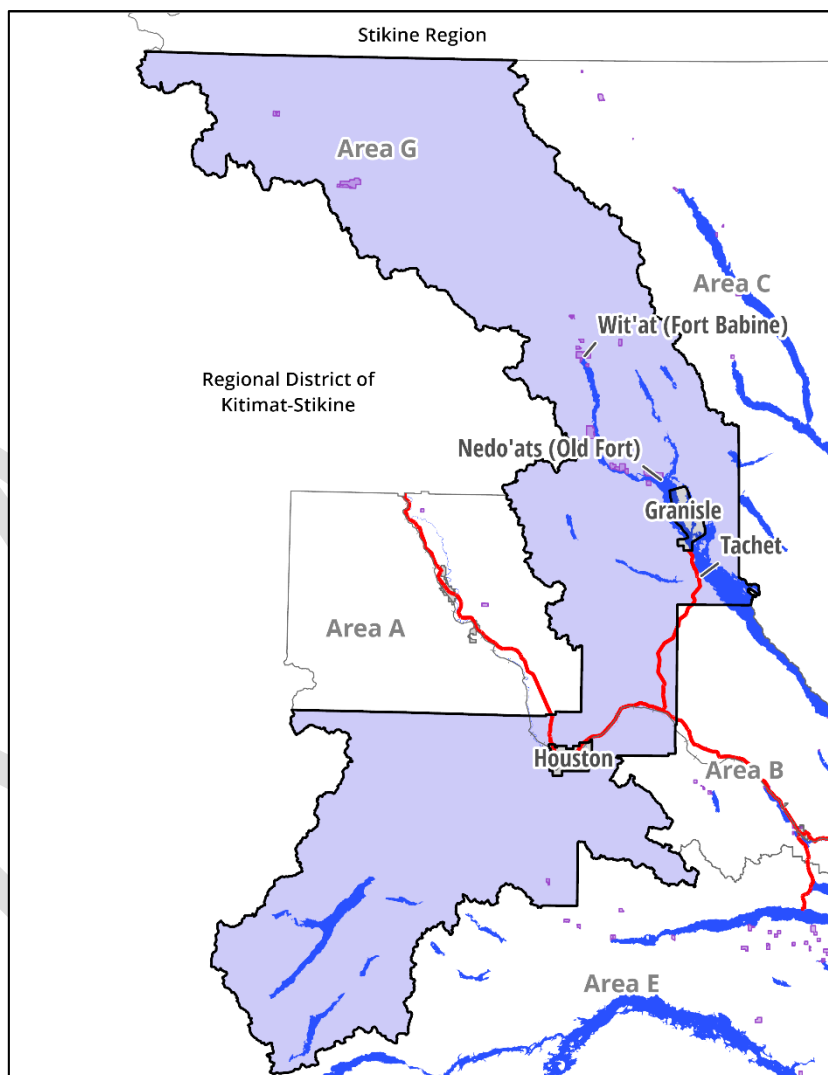
1.3.1 Lake Babine Nation

Lake Babine Nation has registered membership of 2,554 people both on-reserve and off-reserve. 1,349 band members live in the three main reserves: Woyenne Reserve in Burns Lake; Tachet Reserve near Granisle; and Fort Babine Reserve near Babine Lake. Lake Babine Nation identifies traditional territory within the Plan area and Wit'at (Fort Babine / Babine 6 and 16 reserve), Babine (Babine 6 reserve), Nedo'ats (Old Fort / Nedoats reserves 11 and 13), and Tachet (Babine 25 reserve) are populated communities in the Plan area

While Statistics Canada lists the population of Wit'at as 75 residents, according to Lake Babine Nation's website, the community has nearly 200 residents in 36 homes. Wit'at has an elementary school, a health clinic, a water treatment plant and a satellite band office, and a salmon enhancement project. The community is accessed by a gravel forestry service road and is approximately 145 kilometres from Smithers which is the closest municipality. The name Wit'at comes from an abbreviation of "Wit'ane Keh", meaning "place of making dry fish".

Nedo'ats was established at the north end of Babine Lake as a mostly summer community. While Statistics Canada lists the population as zero people, according to Lake Babine Nation's website, 15 families live at Nedo'ats in the summer and occasionally one or two families will stay year-round to fish, hunt, and trap. It is approximately 32 kilometres from the Village of Granisle and only accessible by boat.

Map No. 2: First Nation Communities in the Plan Area



Tachet lies where the Fulton River meets Babine Lake, near the unincorporated community of Topley Landing. While Statistics Canada lists the population of the 98-hectare reserve as 86 people, according to Lake Babine Nation's website, the community has a population of approximately 200 living in 46 homes. The community has a childcare facility, sports field, gas station, convenience store, water treatment plant, health clinic, and community hall.

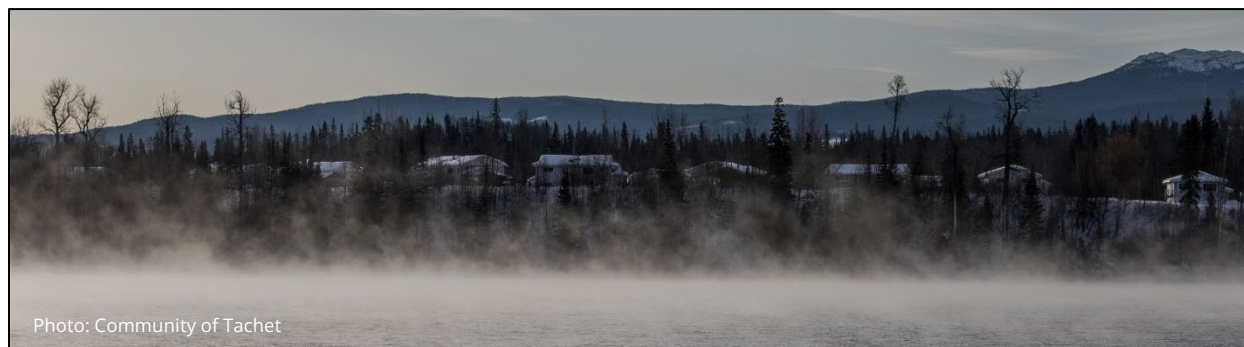


Photo: Community of Tachet

The Woyenne Reserve is the largest of Lake Babine Nation's communities and it contains the Nation's main band office and a preschool, kindergarten, daycare, and adult learning centre. Woyenne is located within the Village of Burns Lake, which is outside of the Plan area.

[Sources: Lake Babine Nation's website, October 2025 and March 2026; and Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada First Nations Registered Population, January 2026].

Information about the Lake Babine Nation can be found on their webpage at: <https://www.lakebabine.com/>.

1.4 First Nations with Interests in Plan Area

1.4.1 Binche Whut'en

Binche Whut'en ceded from Tl'azt'en Nation in 2019. Binche Whut'en's population is almost 250 members with ten reserves located northwest of Fort St. James, outside of the Plan area. The main community of Binche is located on the shores of Stuart Lake and contains a commercial campground, Binche Bay store and gas station, a shuttle service, and several businesses. Binche Whut'en identifies traditional territory within the Plan area. [Sources: Binche Whut'en's website and Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada First Nations Registered Population, September 2025].

Additional information about Binche Whut'en can be found on their webpage at <https://binche.ca/>.

1.4.2 Cheslatta Carrier Nation

Cheslatta Carrier Nation has a population of 390 members living on 17 reserves and off reserve. The reserves total nearly 1,400 hectares, outside of the Plan area.

The band office and other community buildings are located on a reserve about four kilometre south of the Southbank ferry landing, in Danskin. Prior to 1952, the people of Cheslatta Carrier Nation lived for centuries on the shores of the Cheslatta and Murray Lakes. [Sources: Cheslatta Carrier Nation's website and Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada First Nations Registered Population, September 2025].

Information about Cheslatta Carrier Nation can be found on their webpage at: <https://www.cheslatta.com/>.

1.4.3 Gitxsan Huwilp Government

The Gitxsan Laxyip (traditional territories) in northwest British Columbia cover 33,000 square kilometres. The Laxyip is governed by 60 Simgiigyet (Hereditary Chiefs) within the traditional hereditary system and is comprised of several f Wilp (Houses). Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada First Nations registered population for Gitxsan people have a membership of approximately 13,000 members with most members living in the communities of Gitwangak, Gitsegukla, Gitanmaax, Glen Vowell, Kispiox or the Hazelton area. The Gitxsan Nation identify traditional territory within the Plan area. [Sources: Gitxsan's website, September 2025].

Information about the Gitxsan Huwilp Government and the Gitxsan Laxyip can be found on their webpage at: <https://gitxsan.ca/the-gitxsan-laxyip-territory/>.

1.4.4 Gitanmaax Band

The Gitanmaax Band is a band government of the Gitxsan people with a registered on-reserve population of 687 people and a total Band membership of 2,675 people. Most of Gitanmaax Band's reserve lands are near the confluence of the Skeena and Bulkley Rivers, adjacent to the village of Hazelton.

Gitanmaax Band owns Ksan Campground, Ksan Village, and the Troi Town Theatre and operates several member services, including Meals on Wheels, Gitanmaax Soup Bowl, The Smokehouse Project, and the Gitanmaax Helping Hands to get youth members work experience. [Sources: Gitanmaax Band's website and Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada First Nations Registered Population, October 2025].

Information about the Gitanmaax Band can be found on their webpage at: <https://www.gitanmaax.com/>.

1.4.5 Kispiox Band

Based on the Kispiox Band website, the band has 1,555 members with 607 members living on reserve lands, with Statistics Canada Census for 2021 stating that Kispiox reserve has a population of 590 people. There are six villages within 75 kilometres of the Hazelton area. [Sources: Kispiox Band website, October 2025 and Statistics Canada Census Profile, 2021].

Information about the Kispiox Band can be found on their webpage at:

<https://www.kispioxband.ca/>.

1.4.6 Haisla Nation

Haisla means "Dwellers down river". Haisla Nation has over 2,000 members. While the Statistics Canada Census for 2021 Tsee-Motsa (Kitamaat Village reserve) has a population of 520 people, according to Haisla Nation, the population is approximately 700. Tsee-Motsa is located at the head of the Douglas Channel, 10 kilometres from the District of Kitimat.

Haisla Nation identifies traditional territory within the Plan area. [Sources: Haisla Nation's website, October 2025 and Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada First Nations Registered Population, October 2025].

Information about the Haisla Nation can be found on their webpage at: <https://haisla.ca/>.

1.4.7 Kitselas First Nation

While Kitselas First Nation states that the Nation has over 700 members both on-reserve and off-reserve, the federal registered population listed as 806 registered members. Most members live on two reserves near Terrace. The main community of the Kitselas First Nation has a population of 380 and is located on the Skeena River near its confluence with Kleanza Creek. Kitselas First Nation identifies traditional territory within the Plan area. [Sources: Kitselas First Nation website, October 2025; Statistics Canada Census Profile, 2021 and Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada First Nations Registered Population, February 2026].

Information about Kitselas First Nation can be found on their webpage at:

<https://kitselas.com/>.

1.4.8 Kwadacha Nation

Kwadacha Nation (Tsek'ene) was formerly known as the Fort Ware Band. The Nation has approximately 610 members and three reserves, with areas totaling 385.40 hectares of land. Kwadacha means "white water" and the main community is located 570 kilometres North of Prince George BC at the confluence of the Fox, Kwadacha, and Finlay rivers in the Rocky Mountain Trench with no year-round road access.

Kwadacha has a community store, daycare, school, and the Kwadacha dune Tiiy Centre (adult education centre), along with a summer healing camp (accessed by horseback or plane). The Kwadacha Nation identifies traditional territory within the Plan area. [Sources: Kwadacha Nation website, October 2025 and Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada First Nations Registered Population, October 2025].

Information about Kwadacha Nation can be found on their webpage at:

<https://www.kwadacha.com/>.

1.4.9 Nee Tahi Buhn

Nee Tahi Buhn is named after Nee Tahi Buhn, the name for Francois Lake in the Wet'suwet'en language. The Nation has approximately 150 members and five reserves near the south shore of Francois Lake, with areas totaling approximately 333 hectares of land. Nee Tahi Buhn and Skin Tyee Nation separated in 2000 to become independent bands. Nee Tahi Buhn identifies traditional territory within the Plan area and follows a matrilineal clan system. [Sources: Nee Tahi Buhn website, October 2025 and March 2026; and Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada First Nations Registered Population, October 2025].

Information about Nee Tahi Buhn can be found on their webpage at: <https://www.ntbb.ca/>.

1.4.10 Office of the Wet'suwet'en

The Office of the Wet'suwet'en was created as a central office for the Wet'suwet'en First Nation and has been in operation since 1994. The Office offers various services to the Wet'suwet'en Nation regarding land and resource management, human and social services, and treaty negotiations.

The Office of the Wet'suwet'en is governed by the Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs residing throughout the Wet'suwet'en Nation's traditional territory with an office based in Smithers. Wet'suwet'en traditional governance is a clan-based system with each Clan containing Houses.

In 2020, the Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs, the Province of British Columbia, and the Government of Canada signed a Memorandum of Understanding, to recognize Wet'suwet'en Rights and Title and to begin negotiations for legal recognition for the Wet'suwet'en Houses as the holder of Aboriginal Rights and Title. [Office of the Wet'suwet'en's website, October 2025]

Information about the Office of the Wet'suwet'en can be found on their webpage at: <http://www.wetsuweten.com/>.

1.4.11 Wet'suwet'en First Nation

Wet'suwet'en First Nation was formerly known as Broman Lake Indian Band and has approximately 251 members on and off reserve lands. Wet'suwet'en First Nation was formerly part of Omineca Band. In 1984 Omineca Band split into Wet'suwet'en First Nation and Nee Tahi Buhn.

The Wet'suwet'en First Nation is located at the Palling Indian Reserve No. 1 to the west of the unincorporated community Decker Lake, outside of the Plan area. Wet'suwet'en First Nation has 650 hectares of reserve lands and one reserve in the Plan area at Owen Lake. [Sources: Wet'suwet'en First Nation's website, October 2025 and Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada First Nations Registered Population, September 2025].

Information about Wet'suwet'en First Nation can be found on their webpage at: <https://www.wetsuweten.net/>.

1.4.12 Skin Tyee Nation

Skin Tyee Nation has a population of 194 members both on-reserve and off-reserve. Skin Tyee Nation and Nee Tahi Buhn separated in 2000 to become independent bands.

The main community and band office of Skin Tyee Nation is located at Uncha Lake, which is south of Francois Lake and outside the Plan area. Skin Tyee Nation identifies traditional territory within the Plan area. [Sources: Skin Tyee Nation's website, September 2025 and Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada First Nations Registered Population, September 2025].

Information about Skin Tyee Nation can be found on their webpage at: <https://www.skintyeefirstnation.org/>.

1.4.13 Stellat'en First Nation

Stellat'en First Nation is a member of the Yinka Dene, an Athapaskan-speaking people who live in the Central Interior, Bulkley Valley, Cariboo-Chilcotin, and Peace River areas. Stellat'en First Nation is a member of the Carrier Sekani Tribal Council.

Stellat'en First Nation has 642 registered members on and off reserve as of February 2025 (Stellat'en First Nation website) and two reserves. Stellaquo (Stella) No. 1 Reserve is 830 hectares and sits at confluence of the Stellako and Endako Rivers, on the banks of Nadleh Bun (name of Fraser Lake in Dakelh). It is the main community and includes the band office, church, community hall, a gas station and convenience store. Binta Lake 2 Reserve is 3.75 hectares and on the shores of Binta Lake.

Stellat'en First Nation identifies traditional territory within the Plan area. [Sources: Stellat'en First Nation's website, September 2025 and Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada First Nations Registered Population, March 2026].

Information about Stellat'en First Nation can be found on their webpage at: <https://www.stellaten.ca/>.

1.4.14 Takla Nation

Takla Nation has 18 reserves around Takla Lake and a registered population of 957 members. Takla Nation was formed by an amalgamation of the North Takla Band and the Fort Connelly Band in 1959. The main community of Takla Landing is located over 180 km north of Fort St. James, accessed by forest service road and has approximately 250 residents. The community has an elementary school, health centre, store, restaurant, motel, and gas bar.

Through the Sasuchan Development Corporation, the Nation pursues economic interests in logging, fuel, construction, tourism, retail, real estate, and other ventures. The Nation is

also a member of the Carrier Sekani Tribal Council. Takla Nation identifies traditional territory within the Plan area. [Sources: Takla Nation's website, October 2025 and Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada First Nations Registered Population, January 2026].

Information about Takla Nation can be found on their webpage at <https://www.taklafn.ca/>.

1.4.15 Yekooche First Nation

Yekooche First Nation has a population of approximately 223 members and four reserves totaling approximately 379 hectares. Once part of the amalgamated Stuart-Trembleur Lakes Band, later known as Tl'azt'en Nation, Yekooche formed their own community in 1994.

Most band members live in the community of Yekooche which is located along the northwest arm of Stuart Lake, outside of the Plan area. In the summer, many members spread out to ancestral Keyoh to live with extended family on the land. [Sources: Yekooche First Nation's website, October 2025 and Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada First Nations Registered Population, September 2025].

Information about Yekooche First Nation can be found on their webpage: <http://www.yekooche.com/>.

1.5 Legislative Authority

The *Houston, Granisle, and Topley Rural Official Community Plan* has been prepared in accordance with the *Local Government Act*.

Lands within the Plan area are subject to provincial and federal legislation or regulations, which have a significant impact on land use and development. This includes, but is not limited to, the *Forest and Range Practices Act*, *Public Health Act*, *Land Act*, *Mines Act*, *Environmental Management Act*, *Energy Resource Activities Act*, the *Water Sustainability Act* and the *Agricultural Land Commission Act*. Certain aspects of the Plan are required to be in accordance with provincial legislation and interests.

The *Local Government Act* (section 474 (2)) states that:

"If a local government proposes to include a matter in an official community plan, the regulation of which is not within the jurisdiction of the local government, the Plan may state only the broad objective of the local government with respect to that matter unless the minister has, under section 473 (1) (g), required or authorized the local government to state a policy with respect to that matter."

1.6 Plan Review and Amendments

New information and changing circumstances must be continually monitored to ensure that the application of the Plan continues to be current. A comprehensive review of the Plan should be undertaken every ten years depending on the actual conditions which occur

to influence land use. This review may be required sooner if there are significant changes in population growth or other changes impacting land use and development.

Amendments to the Plan must be made in accordance with the *Local Government Act* and are subject to a formal approval process. Individuals or groups requesting amendments to the Plan must submit an application, with supporting material, to the Board of Directors for consideration. The Board may choose to refuse to approve an application and deal with the broader land use issue as part of the next planned comprehensive review.

1.7 The Planning Process

In March 2025 the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Board of Directors directed staff to proceed with the review process for the *Houston, Granisle, and Topley Rural Official Community Plan* (the OCP) and approved a consultation strategy.

The review process began with referrals sent to local First Nations, community groups, the District of Houston, the Village of Granisle, the School Boards for Nechako Lakes School District No. 91 and Bulkley Valley School District No. 54, and various provincial ministries.

Open houses were held on May 26 in Houston, May 27 in Topley, and May 28 in Granisle to introduce the review process to the public and to solicit participation in a working group to assist in the review process and the drafting of a new Plan. At the open houses the Regional District also undertook a survey to obtain public input regarding the issues that require attention in the Plan, was made available throughout the summer and fall on the RDBN website and physical locations in Topley and Granisle.

A survey was made available electronically on the RDBN's website and in hard copy from May to mid-December 2025. Staff attended the Houston Farmers' Market on June 13, Granisle Days on August 9, and the Village of Granisle Town Hall on October 22, to share information on the OCP review process and to make the survey available. Additionally, the survey was made available at the Topley General Store and the Office of the Village of Granisle.

The District of Houston, the Village of Granisle, the Houston & District Chamber of Commerce, Community Futures - Nadina, the Pleasant Valley Cattlemen's Association, the Topley Community Club, the Ministry of Transportation and Transit, Northern Health, Binche Whut'en, Cheslatta Carrier Nation, Gitxsan Simgiigyet (Hereditary Chiefs), Gitxsan Laxyip (Territory) Management Office, Haisla Nation, Kitselas First Nation, Kwadacha Nation, Lake Babine Nation, Nee Tahi Buhn, Office of the Wet'suwet'en, Skin Tyee Nation, Stellat'en First Nation, Takla Nation, Wet'suwet'en First Nation, Witsset First Nation, and Yekooche First Nation were asked to provide a representative to participate on the working group. The community at large and the Area G Advisory Planning Commission were also invited to participate as part of the working group.

On May 22, 2025, a special Electoral Area G (Houston/Granisle Rural) Advisory Planning Commission (APC) meeting was held to discuss the upcoming review of the OCP and invite

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interested APC members to the Working Group. A member of the public, organization representatives and APC members signed up for the Working Group and were sent background information about the OCP. The working group members were also provided with a preliminary draft of the OCP created by staff to provide a format for discussion of issues. A series of working group meetings were held in 2025 on October 16, October 30 and [DATES to be determined]. The focus was on reviewing the process and the mandate of an OCP, identifying and discussing key issues, establishing community visions and goals for the Plan area, and reviewing the policies contained in the Plan.

[Final Steps of this section to be written once this step in the process is completed.]



1.

2. PLAN VISION AND GOALS

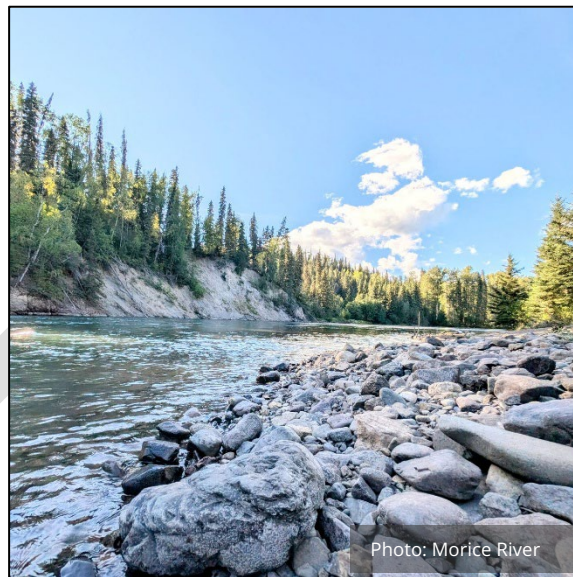


Photo: Houston Palisades

2.1 General Plan Vision

Electoral Area G envisions its future as a safe, friendly, socially and economically vibrant, and ecologically healthy area. The residents of Electoral Area G understand that development and growth must occur in a manner that is not detrimental to the area's diverse natural habitat, the world class recreational opportunities, community well-being, and the rural character of the communities.

Residents enjoy an excellent quality of life that is based upon enjoyment and stewardship of the natural environment, support of and respect for neighbours, an affordable cost of living, a quiet and independent lifestyle, and a relatively stable regional economy. The vision includes communities that strive to protect, and build upon, the above positive aspects that contribute to quality of life, community well-being, and a healthy environment.



A more diversified economy is becoming increasingly important to ensure that the area remains vibrant, and residents enjoy economic and employment stability. These communities realize that being able to offer newcomers to the area a high quality of life, diverse recreational opportunities, and an attractive and well-functioning built environment will serve to increase the potential for economic diversification beyond reliance on the forest products industry.

The value of the area's lakes and rivers are critical components of residents' quality of life and the local economy. Therefore, the benefits as well as the responsibilities of waterfront living are recognized. This recognition results in the vision of communities that protect the natural ecology of the area and promote responsible public access to, and enjoyment of, the area's lakes and rivers.

Maintaining the character of existing rural neighbourhoods is also considered important. This character includes a certain amount of independence and diversity of use and development. The vision is for communities that protect their positive aspects and characteristics yet embrace and work towards positive change for the benefit of the communities.

The Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako is committed to working with local communities in fulfilling its role to address climate change and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions generated in the region. The Plan achieves this by striving for land use patterns that create more complete and energy-efficient rural neighbourhoods and communities.

2.2 General Plan Goals

In achieving the above vision, the OCP strives to meet the needs of the present without compromising the area's natural, social, and economic attributes and without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In this effort the Houston, Topley, Granisle Rural Official Community Plan pursues the following goals.

- (1) Land use patterns and economic activities which do not compromise the rural character of the Plan area.
- (2) Land use patterns that maintain the existing rural character of the Plan area and that reflect a diversity of lifestyles, and economic and recreational activities.
- (3) Protection and preservation of land for the development of viable and sustainable agriculture and food industries.
- (4) Protection and stewardship of environmentally sensitive attributes, including fish, riparian and wildlife habitat; air quality; and quality and quantity of ground and surface water.
- (5) Recognition of the unique natural characteristics of the Plan area and their protection from development that has the potential to negatively impact the natural environment.
- (6) Maintenance of a balance between the regulation of land use to protect community values and the desire of residents for a lifestyle with a high degree of self-expression respecting use of their property.
- (7) Facilitation of opportunities for economic development and diversification.
- (8) Directing large scale commercial development, and urban type development to the District of Houston and the Village of Granisle.
- (9) Rural growth occurring in a controlled manner which limits the extent of rural sprawl, preserves select areas for industrial opportunities and limits the impact of growth on the natural environment.
- (10) An appropriate mix of uses that increases the area's independence and results in a reduction in motorized vehicle dependency and energy use.
- (11) Increased opportunities for recreation for all residents, including access to lakes, rivers, camping sites, trails, and parks.

2.3 Topley

Topley is an unincorporated community located at the junction of Highway 16 and Highway 118, approximately 26 kilometres east of the District of Houston. The community is supported primarily by employment from forestry and local business.

The community contains a convenience store, restaurant, motel, community hall, outdoor recreation area, volunteer fire department, fuel services, and approximately 81 persons living in 48 homes.



Topley has the following goals that are in addition to the general plan goals.

- (1) To provide appropriate opportunities for local employment within the community.
- (2) To encourage the establishment of local service businesses in the community.
- (3) To improve the aesthetic appearance of the community.

2.4 Topley Landing

Topley Landing is a community located around the outlet of the Fulton River into Babine Lake approximately 40 kilometres north of Topley, off of Highway 118. The unincorporated community consists primarily of seasonal dwellings, with a few full-time residents. The community contains two commercial resorts, a campground, a Department of Fisheries and Oceans fisheries operation, a barge landing, an outdoor recreation area, and approximately 89 dwellings. Topley Landing is in close proximity to the Lake Babine First Nation community of Tachet.



The community of Topley Landing experiences a large influx of tourists during the summer months. Of particular note is the Sockeye fishery that typically opens from the first of August to the fifteenth of September that draws an exceptionally large number of campers and boaters to the area.

Topley Landing has the following goals that are in addition to the general plan goals.

- (1) To improve local tourism facilities and services, to limit the negative impacts associated with seasonal tourism peaks.
- (2) To provide additional opportunities for local outdoor recreation.

3. OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES



The Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako is committed to achievement of the goals in this Plan through application of the policies in this section.

3.1 Agriculture (AG) Designation

The Agriculture (AG) designation applies to those areas that are most suitable for agricultural activities. Given the importance of local agriculture in supporting local food systems and food security in the Plan area, it is the intent of this designation to preserve these lands for the purposes of farming and other related activities. In general, the Agriculture (AG) designation follows the boundaries of the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR).

3.1.1 Objectives

- (1) To protect and preserve farm land and soil having agricultural capability, and land for non-soil-based agriculture.
- (2) To encourage the expansion and full utilization of land for agricultural purposes.
- (3) To support the objectives of the Provincial Agricultural Land Commission.
- (4) To encourage a diversity of agricultural uses and opportunities.
- (5)

3.1.2 Policies

- (1) Agriculture, grazing, and other compatible uses of land provided within the *Agricultural Land Commission Act* and its regulations will be permitted.
- (2) Silviculture practices and aggregate extraction that allows for the restoration of land for agriculture are supported within the Agricultural (AG) designation.
- (3) A parcel size of less than 16 hectares (39.5 acres) is not supported unless a different parcel size is approved by the Agricultural Land Commission; however, a subdivision creating more than five parcels that are less than 16 hectares (39.5 acres) in size is not supported regardless of Agricultural Land Commission approval.
- (4) New roads and utility and communication corridors required in the Plan area should minimize the negative impact on existing and potential agricultural operations.
- (5) Wherever possible contiguous areas of agricultural land will be preserved to ensure that agriculture and associated activities remain economically viable and environmentally sound.
- (6) Subdivision within the Agricultural Land Reserve (other than home site severances approved by the Agricultural Land Commission) shall be avoided.

However, applications for subdivisions, non-farm uses and non-adhering residential uses within the ALR may be supported if the proposed subdivision or use will not have a negative impact on the agricultural use or agricultural potential of the subject lands or surrounding agricultural lands.

- (7) The inclusion of land in the Agricultural Land Reserve is supported provided the reason for inclusion is based solely on the suitability of that land.
- (8) The voluntary consolidation of legal parcels which form part of the same farm unit will be encouraged. Subdivisions and consolidations which permit more efficient use of land for agricultural purposes will also be supported.
- (9) The Regional District supports the implementation and enforcement of the *Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act*, the Code of Agricultural Practice for Waste Management, and applicable provincial government environmental guidelines for agricultural producers.
- (10) Home based businesses, including bed and breakfasts, operating in accordance with the requirements of the Agricultural Land Reserve are supported.
- (11) The province is encouraged to implement innovative approaches to making appropriately located Crown lands available and affordable for agricultural use.
- (12) The Regional District encourages the Agricultural Land Commission to take steps to prohibit the use of productive agricultural land for the planting of trees for purposes of creating a carbon sink or carbon offset.
- (13) The planting of trees on non-arable land within the Agricultural Designation is encouraged.
- (14) The province is encouraged to support local agricultural operations to ensure their long-term viability.

3.2 Commercial (C) Designation

Only a limited amount of land for commercial development has been designated within the Plan area in an attempt to focus commercial activity within the District of Houston, the Village of Granisle and the community of Topley. Opportunities for neighbourhood-based services, tourist commercial services and bed and breakfasts may be permitted within the rural areas surrounding these communities subject to the following objectives and policies.

3.2.1 Objectives

- (1) To provide for limited and appropriate opportunities for tourist and neighbourhood commercial development throughout the Plan area, where those services are necessary and do not conflict with existing uses.
- (2) To support and provide opportunities for home based business.
- (3) To recognize the District of Houston, the Village of Granisle and the community of Topley as the commercial centres of the Plan area.

3.2.2 Policies

- (1) Commercial uses that exceed the scale and scope needed to serve the local community will be encouraged to establish within the District of Houston, the Village of Granisle, and the community of Topley.
- (2) Commercial areas for neighbourhood services may be designated subject to the following criteria.
 - (a) The primary target market for the service(s) to be provided or sold is the local rural area.
 - (b) Sufficient on-site parking is provided.
 - (c) The proposed commercial use will not create an amount of traffic, noise or other impact that will adversely affect the rural character of the area.
 - (d) The proposed commercial development will minimize negative impacts on the natural environment.
 - (e) The proposed commercial use will minimize negative impacts on neighbouring land uses or property owners.
 - (f) The proposed commercial use has the support of the Agricultural Land Commission if the land is within the ALR.
- (3) Tourist Commercial uses may be designated subject to the following criteria.

- (a) The use is directly associated with a distinctive or special characteristic or feature of the Plan area.
 - (b) The proposed commercial use will not create an amount of traffic, noise or other impact that will adversely affect the rural character of the area.
 - (c) Traffic management issues will be considered and addressed appropriately.
 - (d) The proposed commercial development will not have a significant negative impact on the natural environment.
 - (e) Negative impacts on neighbouring land uses or property owners are minimized.
 - (f) The proposed commercial use has the support of the Agricultural Land Commission if the land is within the ALR.
- (4) Home based businesses are supported subject to restrictions on size, outdoor storage, employees and limitations on use.
- (5) Bed and breakfasts are encouraged throughout the Plan area subject to the following criteria:
- (a) any bed and breakfast rooms shall be operated by a resident of a dwelling unit located on the same parcel;
 - (b) the number of rooms available for guest use shall vary depending upon the characteristics of the parcel and in no case shall exceed five (5) bedrooms;
 - (c) the sewage disposal system has an appropriate capacity for the size of bed and breakfast; and
 - (d) it will not have an adverse impact on neighbouring uses or the rural character of the area.
- (6) Rezoning application for commercial uses may be considered by the Board of Directors if it can be demonstrated that the parcels will have appropriate minimum parcel sizes for commercial uses.
- (7) To encourage the establishment of permanent greenbelt buffers along parcel boundaries to provide a physical separation between commercial uses of land and adjacent agricultural lands.

3.3 Industrial (I) Designation

Industrial development has been limited within the rural area in an attempt to focus industrial activity in the District of Houston and the Village of Granisle. Heavy and light industrial developments are permitted within the rural area within the Industrial (I) designation. Other areas may be considered for Industrial use subject to the following Industrial policies.

3.3.1 Objectives

- (1) To provide opportunities for limited light industrial uses in suitable locations.
- (2) To accommodate primary resource extraction and primary processing, as well as value added industry.
- (3) To support industrial uses that will not have significant negative impact on the natural environment.

3.3.2 Policies

- (1) New light industrial uses will be encouraged to be established within the boundaries of the District of Houston and the Village of Granisle.
- (2) The Regional District Board may consider designating additional areas for industrial uses subject to the following criteria:
 - (a) the proposed industrial development will not create an amount of traffic, noise, off-site air pollution, or other impact that will adversely affect the rural character of the area;
 - (b) the proposed industrial development will be developed in a manner that has minimal negative impacts on the environment;
 - (c) it has been demonstrated that the proposed industrial use that will create significant amounts of fine particulate matter (PM 2.5) is not in close proximity to populated areas;
 - (d) negative impacts on neighbouring land uses or property owners will be minimized; and,
 - (e) the proposed industrial use has the support of the Agricultural Land Commission if the land is within the ALR.
- (3) Agricultural industry is supported in appropriate locations throughout the Plan area.

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- (4) To encourage the establishment of permanent greenbelt buffers along parcel boundaries to provide a physical separation between industrial uses of land and adjacent agricultural lands.
- (5) The Regional District Board may consider designating additional areas for light industrial use near the District of Houston Airport where those uses benefit from proximity to an airport.
- (6) Land along the Morice River Road west of the District of Houston boundary may be considered for rezoning to allow industrial use without an Industrial designation.



3.4 Rural Residential (RR) Designation

The Rural Residential (RR) designation is intended to provide opportunities for people to live in a rural setting while protecting and preserving the rural character of the area. Development requiring a higher level of regulation and community services, such as water and sewer systems (not including bare land strata developments) will be directed into the District of Houston and the Village of Granisle.

3.4.1 Objectives

- (1) To provide opportunities for residential parcels that fit the existing rural character of the Plan area.
- (2) To support opportunities for affordable housing, rental housing and special needs housing.
- (3) To ensure future development does not have a significant negative impact on the natural environment.
- (4) To protect and enhance the quality of life associated with existing and new rural residential development.
- (5) To take advantage of opportunities for housing forms, such as bare land strata and other new housing forms that fit the character of rural areas to allow rural residents greater opportunity to age in place.

3.4.2 Policies

- (1) Low to moderate density residential (fee simple and bare land strata) subdivisions, recreational and other unobtrusive uses will be permitted in the Rural Residential designation.
- (2) To reduce agricultural runoff in water systems, limited forms of agriculture may be permitted within the implementing zoning bylaw where parcels are at least 100 metres from any lake or named watercourse.
- (3) Home based business and cottage industries are supported subject to restrictions which will ensure that they will not have an adverse impact on neighbouring uses, and the rural character of the area.
- (4) The Regional District will not take responsibility for the operation, maintenance or funding of any new water or sewer system associated with Rural Residential development.
- (5) Rezoning applications to allow a strata subdivision that relies on privately operated sewer or water systems may be considered by the Board of Directors if it can be demonstrated that the system can be adequately

- designed and maintained, with consideration given to the need for a capital reserve for system replacement.
- (6) Rezoning applications to allow a freehold subdivision that relies on privately operated sewer or water systems shall not be supported.
- (7) Rezoning applications to allow a second single family dwelling on a parcel in a Residential Zone may only be considered under the following circumstances:
- (a) it has been demonstrated that any existing on-site sewage disposal system is authorized by Northern Health and is in good working order;
 - (b) it has been demonstrated that the parcel can accommodate an on-site sewage disposal system for two single family dwellings, including, any potential secondary suites;
 - (c) the development is compatible with adjacent land uses and maintains the rural character of the area; and
 - (d) the parcel is not located on lands where a landslide or slope stability hazard exists, or on a floodplain, without a safe building site area.
- (8) Rezoning applications to permit parcels as small as 2 hectares (4.94 acres) may be considered where:
- (a) there is no known barrier to the development of an on-site water supply and sewage disposal system;
 - (b) the development is compatible with adjacent land uses and maintains the rural character of the area;
 - (c) parcels are not located on lands where a landslide or slope stability hazard exists, or on a floodplain, without a safe building site area; and,
 - (d) the development adequately addresses wildlife and ecological values.
- (9) Rezoning applications to permit parcels smaller than 2 hectares (4.94 acres) to a minimum parcel size of 0.8 hectares (2 acres) may be considered where:
- (a) the reduced parcel size for certain parcels will result in a parcel layout that provides improved protection of an environmentally unique or sensitive area;
 - (b) the average size of all parcels created is not smaller than 2 hectares (4.94 acres); and

- (c) the criteria outlined in Section 3.4.2 (8) are addressed.
- (10) Rezoning applications to permit parcels smaller than 2 hectares (4.94 acres) to a minimum parcel size of 0.4 hectares (1 acre) may be considered where:
- (a) an existing parcel is truncated by an existing road or natural water feature and an area smaller than 2 hectares (4.94 acres) is naturally created by the truncation; and,
 - (b) the criteria outlined in Section 3.4.2 (8) are addressed.
- (11) Rezoning applications to allow a strata subdivision with parcels smaller than 2 hectares (4.94 acres) may be considered where appropriate, provided that:
- (a) the size of the parent parcel is a minimum of 1.2 hectares (3 acres) of Rural Residential designated land for each strata parcel proposed (for example a proposal for five strata parcels would require a parent parcel of 6 hectares (15 acres);
 - (b) a covenant restricting further subdivision of the parcel is encouraged;
 - (c) the applicant submits an acceptable fire prevention plan for the development and consideration is given to securing the major aspects of the plan by covenant, unless the land is in a Rural Fire Protection Service Area;
 - (d) for waterfront developments, the subdivision includes less than 15 strata parcels; and,
 - (e) the criteria outlined in Section 3.4.2 (8) are addressed.
- (12) The establishment of permanent greenbelt buffers along parcel boundaries to provide a physical separation between residential uses of land and adjacent agricultural lands are encouraged.
- (13) Manufactured Home Parks are directed to locate within the District of Houston or the Village of Granisle where water and sewer services are more available. The development of new Manufactured Home Parks in the Regional District shall be considered within the community of Topley and discouraged throughout the remaining plan area.
- (14) Rezoning applications to permit new waterfront parcels (with the exception of strata parcels) shall not be supported if a lot is serviced by a septic field that is within 100 metres from any lake or named watercourse.
- (15) Rezoning applications to permit new waterfront subdivisions that would typically contain several waterfront access points shall consider amalgamating water access points onto a single area, and the Provincial

Approving Officer is encouraged to consider options to amalgamate required water access points into a single area.

3.5 Civic Institutional (CI) Designation

The Civic Institutional (CI) designation is intended to provide a range of public, government, and community related uses within the Plan area. Such uses may include schools, fire halls, community halls and churches.

3.5.1 Objectives

- (1) To provide for the establishment of public facilities when necessary.

3.5.2 Policies

- (1) Rural emergency and health services, such as rural fire halls or facilities used for emergency response purposes, are acceptable in any designation, subject to zoning.
- (2) The Regional District will cooperate with the local school districts in planning for educational facilities. This will include:
 - (a) assessing the demand for new facilities by considering residential development activities and proposals; and,
 - (b) selecting appropriate sites for schools.
- (3) The Regional District Board will permit additional Civic Institutional uses by way of rezoning, without the requirement for an OCP amendment subject to the following criteria:
 - (a) there is a demonstrated need for the proposed service;
 - (b) the proposed civic institutional use will not create an amount of traffic that will have an unacceptable negative impact on the rural character of the area;
 - (c) the proposed civic institutional development will minimize negative impacts on the environment;
 - (d) the proposed civic institutional use will not have an unacceptable negative impact on the neighbouring land use(s) or property owners; and
 - (e) the proposed civic institutional use has the support of the Agricultural Land Commission if the land is within the ALR.

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- (4) New and existing facilities will be encouraged to include air conditions and air filtrations systems for use during episodes of extreme temperatures and wildfire smoke.



3.6 Parks and Recreation (P) Designation

The economic, social, mental and physical benefits of outdoor recreation and public access to natural amenities are recognized. Lands throughout the Plan area have been designated in an effort to protect areas having significant recreational, cultural, archaeological or environmental attributes. While parks and recreation uses are permitted throughout the Plan area, the Parks and Recreation (P) designation may be used in the future to designate additional areas for parks and recreation purposes.

3.6.1 Objectives

- (1) To protect lands having significant recreational, cultural, archaeological and/or environmental value.
- (2) To improve outdoor recreational opportunities that enhance the livability and tourism potential of the area.
- (3) To support and encourage the appropriate use of recreational amenities within the Regional District to enhance the economy of the area.
- (4) To protect or secure public access to natural amenities and important landscape features.
- (5) To support appropriate outdoor public recreation opportunities on Crown lands, in a manner that does not unnecessarily conflict with or restrict the resource capacity or wildlife values of those lands.

3.6.2 Policies

- (1) Provincial parks are recognized as important attributes of the Plan area and are designated as Parks and Recreation (P) on the Land Use Designation Map (Schedule "B").
- (2) Lands Designated Parks and Recreation (P) on Schedule B that are not provincial parks are recognized as having potential for development as parks and trails.
- (3) Crown Land parcels used for parks and recreation purposes will not be subject to a minimum parcel size and may be considered throughout the Plan area in any designation.
- (4) The Regional District Board supports the preservation of existing, and identification of new public recreation sites and access points along area lakes and rivers.
- (5) Parks for passive recreation, playgrounds, protection of wildlife habitat or environmentally sensitive areas may be considered throughout the Plan area in any designation.

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- (5) The Morice Mountain Nordic Ski Club trail network, the Mount Harry Davis mountain biking trails and the Houston Snowmobile Club trails are recognized as having high recreation values.
- (6) Vegetation buffers and setbacks are encouraged for new parks and trails, where practical, where there is a significant conflict with adjacent land uses.



3.7 Resource (RE) Designation

The Resource (RE) designation is characterized by a lack of settlement and by extensive resource management potential. It is the intent of this designation to protect the resource values of the designated area and to minimize resource conflicts among First Nations cultural values, recreation, grazing, mining and wildlife with other uses by discouraging settlement on Resource designated lands. These lands are also valued for their environmental attributes and as wildlife habitats.

3.7.1 Objectives

- (1) To protect lands within the Plan area for resource, environmental, recreational, and cultural values.
- (2) To support sound sustainable resource management within the Resource designation.

3.7.2 Policies

- (1) Only residential uses, and uses directly associated with agriculture and grazing, mineral or aggregate extraction, fish and wildlife management, wilderness-oriented recreation, First Nations culture and tradition, and necessary institutional, public, utility or transportation services use will be supported in the Resource designation, subject to Section 3.3.2(6).
- (2) A very limited amount of low-density residential use may be permitted within this designation, where appropriate.
- (3) The minimum parcel size within the Resource designation shall be 8 hectares (19.77 acres). Rezoning applications to allow increased residential density shall not be supported if the proposed development can be expected to:
 - (a) lead to a conflict with, or otherwise negatively impact forestry, agriculture and grazing, mineral or aggregate extraction, fish and wildlife management, trapping, or wilderness oriented recreation;
 - (b) unnecessarily increase community greenhouse gas emissions; or
 - (c) provide increased demand for provision of Regional District services into a new or remote area.
- (4) Wherever possible established routes used by cattle or wildlife; recreation lands; First Nations culture and tradition; and valuable or unique fish and wildlife habitats will be protected from incompatible land uses.
- (5) Access to timber and recreation lands will be preserved wherever possible.
- (6) Rezoning applications to allow wind turbines intended to generate power for sale shall be considered on Resource designated lands where it can be

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demonstrated that the turbines will not have an unacceptable negative impact on a residential area and will not have an unacceptable environmental impact.

- (7) Rezoning applications to allow outdoor and community recreation activities such as firing ranges, fairgrounds, racetracks, and golf courses shall be considered on Resource designated lands where it can be demonstrated that the uses will not have an unacceptable negative impact on a residential area, and will not have an unacceptable environmental impact.

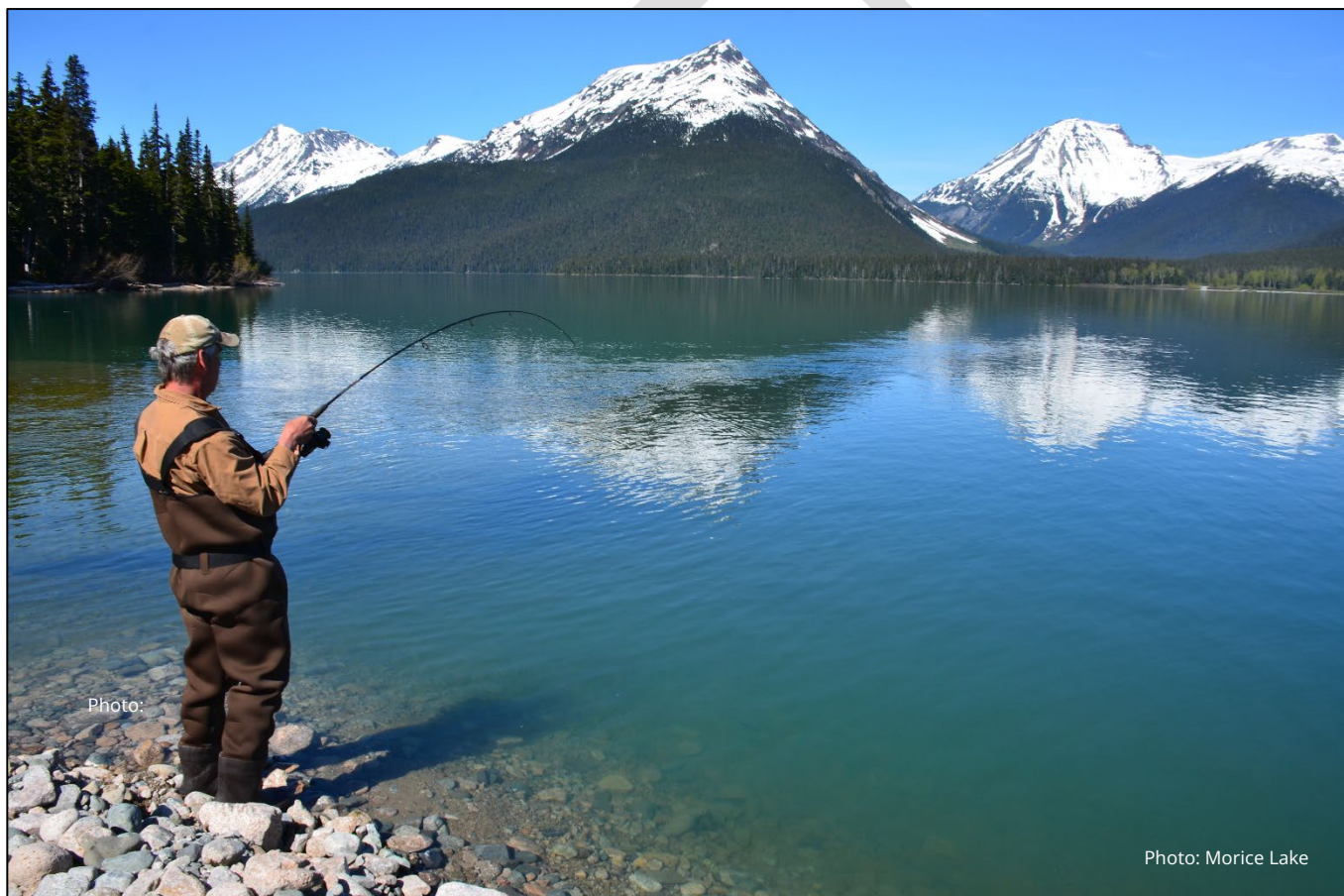


Photo:

Photo: Morice Lake

4. GENERAL APPLICATION OF OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

4.1 Mineral and Aggregate Resources

Several provincial and federal acts pertaining to resource extraction activities supersede the Regional District's land use authority on crown and private land. These acts include, but are not limited to the *Mines Act*, the *Mineral Tenure Act*, and the *Forest and Range Practices Act*. The agencies responsible for managing this legislation are encouraged to implement review processes that address the public interest in these matters, and the final decisions regarding land use rest with the province. The *Local Government Act* only permits a Regional District to express broad objectives with respect to mineral and aggregate resources within an Official Community Plan.

4.1.1 Objectives

- (1) To support the conservative use of mineral and aggregate resource deposits and to protect these from development that would irreversibly prohibit its future utilization.
- (2) To provide opportunities for the exploration and development of metallic, mineral, and sand and gravel resources.
- (3) To encourage the province to require the appropriate rehabilitation of gravel pits.

4.1.2 Policies

- (1) The provincial government is recognized as being responsible for the administration of the province's mineral and aggregate resources under various pieces of legislation.
- (2) All sand and gravel deposits are recognized by the Regional District Board as being within the provincial management jurisdiction. These deposits are too numerous to show on the map in Schedule "B".
- (3) Soil removal and deposit, including aggregate and mineral extraction, within the ALR is recognized as being subject to the *Agricultural Land Commission Act*.
- (4) The Regional District encourages the Ministry of Mining and Critical Minerals to give due consideration to the impact of extraction and processing activities on surrounding land uses and developments.
- (5) The Regional District encourages the Ministry of Mining and Critical Minerals not to issue new surface permits for sand and gravel/quarry processing near residential areas unless the applicant demonstrates how mitigation measures will minimize or nullify the effects of the proposed activity.

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- (6) The Regional District encourages the Ministry of Mining and Critical Minerals to require appropriate reclamation of gravel pits and mine sites and to ensure that adequate bonding is secured, and that the reclamation is undertaken in a timely manner.



Photo: Huckleberry Mine

4.2 Natural Environment

The natural environment is the foundation of the economic, ecological and social viability of the Plan area. As such, careful management at local, regional and provincial levels is necessary. The Regional District recognizes the provincial government as having the primary responsibility in managing this resource and supports provincial efforts to manage the natural environment appropriately.

Babine Lake, the Bulkley River, the Morice River and the Telkwa Range mountains are the predominant natural features of the area. Their importance, along with other lakes and watercourses to the local communities, the entire region, and areas beyond, cannot be over emphasized. These features play a role in many aspects of community life. The lakes and rivers are the source of drinking water, an economic generator, and a recreational playground. Not only are they an important amenity for area communities and visitors, but they are also the natural habitat for a wide variety of fish and aquatic life, waterfowl, mammals and plant species.

The importance of lakes and rivers must also be looked at from a regional perspective. The water drains into the Bulkley and Babine Rivers and makes up part of the Skeena Drainage Basin, which flows into the Pacific Ocean. Communities within the Skeena Drainage Basin also rely on the health of this surface water.

4.2.1 Objectives

- (1) To protect environmentally unique, rare, or sensitive areas or features; including, but not limited to, wildlife corridors, limited wildlife habitats, seasonal and year-round watercourses, lakes, ponds, wetlands, and riparian habitats.
- (2) To protect air quality, and surface and ground water resources for the benefit of the environment and human health and safety.
- (3) To protect the water quality of all area lakes and rivers.
- (4) To enhance environmental awareness and promote activities that protect and restore the natural environment.

4.2.2 Policies

- (1) The Regional District encourages the protection and enhancement of fish and wildlife habitats throughout the Plan area through the following means:
 - (a) alternative development practices such as lot averaging, where appropriate;

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- (b) conservation covenants; and,
 - (c) the dedication of lands to a private land trust, non-government organization, or the province.
- (2) The “Ecological and Wildlife Values” Map (Schedule “C”) shows several important wildlife and ecological areas. The Regional District supports and encourages development proponents to incorporate protection and enhancement of these areas and associated values in the design of development within the Plan area.
 - (3) The Regional District supports efforts by the provincial government to identify wildlife and ecological values, with the input of residents, through various planning processes.
 - (4) The Regional District will support and encourage the retention of a greenbelt of natural vegetation along watercourses.
 - (5) Provincial and federal governments and non-governmental organizations will be supported in their efforts to enhance the fish and wildlife resources in the Plan area.
 - (6) The Regional District recognizes the importance of healthy air quality, and surface and ground water resources on a local, regional and provincial scale and supports efforts to protect the quantity and quality of these resources for future generations.
 - (7) The Regional District encourages environmentally sound farm practices which protect surface and ground water and soil quality.
 - (8) The Regional District encourages the provincial government to undertake an inventory and study of groundwater sources to determine the best means of protecting these water supplies.
 - (9) Efforts to work with the area communities, landowners and developers to protect environmentally unique or sensitive areas through the provision of information and education are supported.
 - (10) Rezoning applications to allow subdivision or development on land adjacent to or containing environmentally unique, rare, or sensitive areas shall only be supported if it can be reasonably demonstrated that the proposed development will not negatively or adversely impact surface or groundwater resources or an environmentally unique or sensitive area.

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- (11) The Regional District supports and encourages the dissemination of educational information about the importance of responsible stewardship of the environment.
- (12) The Regional District encourages the replacement of older, on-site sewage systems with newer systems using improved technology to prevent potential contamination of the shoreline and water.
- (13) The Regional District discourages the removal of vegetation along the shoreline, as this can lead to erosion, loss of food and nutrients for fish, and loss of shade for young fish. Landowners are encouraged to refer to the Ministry of Environment's Best Management Practices for Hazard Tree and Non Hazard Tree Limbing, Topping, or Removal.
- (14) The Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship, in carrying out reviews of foreshore tenure applications, is encouraged to take the following factors into consideration, with emphasis on the environmental sensitivity of the foreshore areas, as well as ensuring an appropriate relationship with upland areas.
 - (a) Private moorage should not impede pedestrian access along the beach portion of the foreshore.
 - (b) The siting of new private moorage shall be undertaken in a manner that is consistent with the orientation of neighbouring private moorage, is sensitive to views and other impacts on neighbours, and avoids impacts on access to existing private moorage and adjacent properties.
 - (c) Non-moorage uses are not appropriate on foreshore areas. These include facilities such as beach houses, storage sheds, patios, sun decks, and hot tubs. These types of development should occur only on privately owned upland areas.
 - (d) Private moorage owners and builders are encouraged to refer to the Ministry of Environment's Best Management Practices for Small Boat Moorage on Lakes, and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans' Pacific Region Operational Statement for Dock Construction, when constructing a dock.
- (15) Government agencies that have mandates for protecting the environmental integrity of the area's lakes, especially Babine Lake, are encouraged to carry out scientific research and water quality testing to monitor the quality of lake

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- water, identify the causes of the reduced water quality, and take steps toward correcting the situation.
- (16) The protection of the environmentally unique or sensitive areas through the purchase or dedication of lands to a private land trust, non-government organization, or the province is encouraged.
 - (17) The Provincial Approving Officer is encouraged to follow provincial guidelines for development near aquatic areas and other environmentally sensitive areas.
 - (18) The province is encouraged to prohibit the dumping of sewage and other waste from boats into lakes and rivers in the region.
 - (19) The Federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans and the BC Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship are encouraged to closely monitor the first of August to fifteenth of September Sockeye fishery in Babine Lake near the mouth of the Fulton River to ensure compliance with federal and provincial regulations.
 - (20) The province is encouraged to evaluate the capacity of the recreation facilities in the Topley Landing area to ensure adequate accommodation of seasonal tourists, especially in conjunction with the first of August to the fifteenth of September Sockeye fishery in Babine Lake.



Photo: Grizzly Bear at Morice River

4.3 Outdoor Recreation

Access to parks, lakes and natural areas is essential to residents' quality of life, and a crucial part of attracting newcomers to the area. Recreational opportunities should support people of diverse abilities and mobility levels.

Electoral Area G, the District of Houston, and the Village of Granisle established a joint Parks and Trails function in 2020 in response to the need for increased recreation facilities in the rural area, and in recognition of the importance of outdoor recreation to quality of life and regional economic development. A Recreation Contribution Service Area was also established in 2020 to make financial support available to service groups providing outdoor recreation opportunities to area residents.

4.3.1 Objectives

- (1) To encourage a broad range of accessible recreational opportunities with minimal impact on the natural environment in the Plan area.
- (2) To support the province, municipal governments, and community organizations in their role of providing public recreation opportunities.

4.3.2 Policies

- (1) Develop an Electoral Area G Parks and Trails Master Plan to serve as a strategy and action plan for recreation, parks, and trails in the rural area and to establish a priority list of projects and tasks to be undertaken to meet community recreation.
- (2) Develop partnerships with community organizations, municipal and provincial government, and the public to enhance the long-term sustainability and viability of community recreation.
- (3) Minimize recreation use conflict with First Nations cultural values.
- (4) The "Recreation Values" Map (Schedule "D") shows major recreational features in the Plan area. The Regional District supports and encourages development proponents to consider recreational values and enhancement of these areas and associated values in the design of development within the Plan area.

4.4 Parkland Dedication

- (1) Where a proposed subdivision triggers a requirement to provide up to five per cent dedication of parkland or cash in lieu pursuant to Section 510 of the *Local Government Act*, the Regional District shall evaluate whether to accept parkland or cash in lieu of parkland or a combination of both.
- (2) Land to be accepted as parkland dedication must be of adequate size and must have adequately high recreation value to provide a benefit to the community. Where this community benefit does not exist because of limited size or limited recreation value of the land, the Regional District may require cash in lieu of parkland dedication to contribute towards the future purchase of parkland in the Electoral Area.
- (3) One or more of the following criteria must be met for land to be considered having a high recreation value:
 - (a) the land is adjacent to a lake or a watercourse and its dedication would improve public access to the water;
 - (b) the land improves access to a park or trail, a school, or public amenity;
 - (c) the land includes viewpoints and opportunities for nature appreciation;
 - (d) the land contains a locally or regionally significant natural feature or ecosystem that if preserved or managed would result in a net benefit to the community;
 - (e) the land is identified for a park or trail use in this Plan or any other Regional District parks and trails plan.
- (4) Environmentally sensitive lands to be retained in a natural undisturbed state or archaeological features to be protected may be accepted as parkland dedication, however, these lands should be in addition to the minimum parkland dedication requirements pursuant to the *Local Government Act*.
- (5) The RDBN shall, when considering a rezoning application, consider accepting the dedication of land for the purpose of parkland, green space, and/or natural areas. Parkland acceptance should be evaluated in accordance with the criterion identified in this section.

4.5 Housing

Pursuant to the *Local Government Act*, all local governments are required to consider their most recent Housing Needs Report, and the housing information on which it is based, when developing an Official Community Plan. The purpose of the Housing Needs Report is to help determine current and projected housing needs in Electoral Area G for the next five years and the next 20 years.

The Regional District completed a full Housing Needs Report in January 2022. As required by the provincial government, the Regional District completed an Interim Housing Needs Report in December 2024, using the Housing Needs Report (HNR) methodology mandated by the province. This Interim Housing Needs Report is the Regional District's most recent Housing Needs Report, and it has been when developing this Official Community Plan. The most recent Housing Needs Report indicates that 26 new dwelling units are needed by 2029, and 83 Dwelling Units are required by 2044 to address anticipated housing needs in Electoral Area G. The available lands designated for residential use within the Plan area far exceeds the 20-year total number of housing units required to meet anticipated housing needs in the Plan area identified in the most recent Housing Needs Report.

Older housing stock from the 1960s to the 1980s in the rural area needs to be replaced or updated at an increased rate, and the region's rural housing stock needs to be diversified to meet the needs of current and future residents. However, the function of the region will not benefit from increased rural growth in comparison to municipal growth, and multi-family housing and non-market housing must be accommodated in municipalities. A key regional challenge in the effort to replace rural housing stock and accommodate increased housing choice in the region is increasingly high construction costs in relation to resale values. Therefore, there is limited new house construction in the region.

The facilitation of investment in housing and the creation of increased diversity of housing type is an economic development and diversification issue, as well as a resident quality of life issue. The Plan area's economic future is not solely determined by the forest products industry, mining, and large energy projects. It is recognized that economic diversification beyond reliance on these industries is dependent on the region's ability to attract skilled workers, entrepreneurs, and professionals that have a high degree of mobility and choice regarding their home community. An ability to provide the services and amenities necessary to maintain a healthy and fulfilling regional lifestyle and attract new residents is a critical component of the Plan area's future. This increased demand is necessary for any market-based solution to the Regional District's housing issues.

The *Local Government Act* requires local governments to include housing policies respecting each class of housing identified in the most recent housing needs report.

4.5.1 Objectives

- (1) To work with and support municipalities in their pursuit of affordable housing, rental housing, housing for seniors and families, special needs housing, beds in shelters for the unhoused, and housing in proximity to transportation infrastructure.
- (2) To ensure that adequate land is available to meet the region's rural housing needs.

4.5.2 Policies

- (1) The Regional District will encourage affordable housing, rental housing, housing for seniors, special needs housing, beds in shelters for the unhoused, and housing in proximity to transportation infrastructure to be developed within the District of Houston and the Village of Granisle to ensure access to the services, supports, and amenities needed by the intended residents of those units.
- (2) The Regional District will provide staff and land use planning support to municipalities as necessary to assist in their provisions of housing necessary in municipalities.
- (3) The Regional District will encourage the development of accessible and adaptable housing options to meet the needs of seniors, persons with mobility issues, and persons with disabilities.
- (4) The Regional District will continue to ensure that land is adequately available for housing for families at a sustainable level appropriate for a low-density rural environment.
- (5) The Regional District encourages the province to consider prohibiting work camps at new mines within a reasonable driving distance of a community in order to promote local residency, with considerations made for short-term camps for mine construction that exceed local housing supply. [addition due to NH recommendation]

4.6 Heritage and Archaeological Resources

Heritage and archaeological resources are recognized by the Regional District as being important Plan area attributes that enhance the area's unique character and sense of place. Archaeological sites are indications of a rich history extending back thousands of years.

Archaeological sites are protected by the Province through the *Heritage Conservation Act* and the *Act* applies to both private and Crown land. The Regional District encourages the identification, protection, and conservation of archaeological, historical and paleontological sites throughout the Plan area.



4.6.1 Objectives

- (1) To encourage and facilitate the identification, protection, and conservation of archaeological, historical, and paleontological sites.
- (2) To implement the applicable provincial legislation regarding archaeological, historical, and paleontological sites as required.

4.6.2 Policies

- (1) In accordance with provincial legislation, development proponents are required to consider archaeological, historical, and paleontological resources during all phases of project planning, design, and implementation.
- (2) The Regional District Board recognizes and supports the application and enforcement of the *Heritage Conservation Act* by the provincial government. Specifically, Sections 12.1 and 12.2 of the *Act* requiring that a Provincial heritage site or provincial heritage object not be altered or changed in any manner without a permit, is supported by the Regional District.

4.7 Public Services and Utilities

The Plan area is characterized by a very low density, dispersed settlement pattern and a level of services and utilities that are common for rural communities. Additional services that are to be supported by the local tax base need to reflect the intent of the Plan to not provide for population growth or densities that will impact the rural character of the Plan area.

4.7.1 Objectives

- (1) To support the planning and development of public services and utilities which are economically feasible and that have an appropriate degree of public support.

4.7.2 Policies

- (1) Urban scale development requiring community water and sewer services, except as appropriate for bare land strata development, will be directed into municipalities where such services can be provided as an extension to existing systems.
- (2) The Regional District will continue to assist rural residents in assessing the feasibility of new utilities and services in accordance with the *Local Government Act*.
- (3) The location of utility services and communication corridors which minimize the disruption of the natural environment and the impact on existing and potential resource activities or land uses (such as resource, environmental, recreational, and cultural values) will be supported.
- (4) The Regional District will encourage the efficient and economic extension of services where there is a demonstrated need and public support.

4.8 Transportation

Cost efficient and safe transportation networks that are well developed and maintained are important within the Plan area. The provincial government is recognized as having responsibility over transportation planning and development within the Plan area.

4.8.1 Objectives

- (1) To ensure the establishment of a safe and efficient transportation network for vehicles, bicyclists, and pedestrians and to consider transportation matters and the functional integrity of the transportation system in land use decisions.
- (2) To ensure that development is not approved without the necessary infrastructure improvements to accommodate the traffic generated by that development.
- (3) To support the development by the Ministry of Transportation and Transit of a safe, efficient, and economic transportation system, which includes active transportation infrastructure, servicing both local and provincial needs.
- (4) To support development and maintenance of new active transportation infrastructure.

4.8.2 Policies

- (1) The Ministry of Transportation and Transit shall be encouraged to consult with the Regional District, First Nations, relevant agencies and the community in the planning of new roads or upgrades within the Plan area to effectively manage impacts to existing and future land uses.
- (2) The Ministry of Transportation and Transit shall, wherever possible, be encouraged to direct future roads away from existing and potential agricultural lands, environmentally sensitive areas, and important views-capes.
- (3) The Ministry of Transportation and Transit is encouraged to service all new parcels with direct access to public road and limit the unnecessary use of common lots for access.
- (4) The Ministry of Transportation and Transit shall, wherever possible, be encouraged to promote anti-idling and dust mitigation efforts on roads near populated areas.

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- (5) The Ministry of Transportation and Transit should be consulted on significant developments adjacent to roads.
- (6) Off-street parking regulations in the zoning bylaw shall ensure a free flow of traffic on public roads.
- (7) Recognize Highway 16 and Highway 118 as main highways where:
 - (a) continuous strip development should be discouraged;
 - (b) development should have access on or to frontage/side roads;
 - (c) the use of adjoining land should be of a type not affected by the noise and speed of traffic on these routes;
 - (d) direct access from the highways should be located, wherever possible, at single, well-spaced cross or four-legged intersections; and
 - (e) parking should be provided on-site to avoid parking on the highway right-of-way.



4.9 Environmental Hazards and Protection

Environmental hazards (including flooding, landslides, and wildfire) have the potential to cause damage or loss of life or property. In some instances, areas within the jurisdiction of this Plan area may not be conducive to development or may require special considerations in their development.

4.9.1 Objectives

- (1) To manage development in a manner that reduces risk to life and damage to property in natural hazard areas.
- (2) To encourage provincial agencies, property owners, and developers to implement development strategies that reduce the risk of flooding and other hazards.
- (3) To ensure that human activities do not contribute to flooding, increased water run-off, soil erosion, environmental pollution, or slope instability.

4.9.2 Policies

- (1) The Regional District will continue to manage building construction in floodplains by way of a floodplain management bylaw with measures such as minimum elevations and setbacks for new construction.
- (2) To protect against loss of life and property damage associated with flooding the Regional District will encourage non-polluting agricultural, park, and recreational uses in designated floodplain areas or on flood susceptible lands.
- (3) The Regional District encourages the Ministry of Forests, the Ministry of Transportation and Transit, and other provincial agencies that have jurisdiction, to implement land use patterns that reduce the risk of wildfire and floods within the Plan area.
- (4) When rezoning to allow subdivision and/or development in areas that are known to have potential hazards, it is important that the proper scientific assessments are undertaken to ensure the area is appropriate for development and to mitigate potential damage to persons or property.
- (5) Rezoning to allow subdivision and/or development in a hazardous area or down slope from a hazardous area, will not be supported if it cannot be demonstrated by a qualified person that measures will be taken to remediate the hazard, make the development capable of withstanding the effects of the hazard in a manner that requires minimal maintenance, and to protect adjacent properties from possible impacts.

4.10 FireSmart Development

Residential development and other developments in proximity to forested areas are at risk from wildfires. Wildfire is recognized and accepted as a significant hazard in the Plan area given the importance of the community maintaining a close connection to the natural environment. This threat has increased due to the dead timber associated with the pine beetle infestation, more frequent and severe drought conditions, historic fire suppression practices, and the impacts of climate change. The OCP supports efforts to reduce the risk associated with wildfire.

4.10.1 Objectives

- (1) To manage new development in a manner that reduces risk to life and damage to property due to wildfire.
- (2) To encourage provincial agencies, property owners, and developers to implement development strategies that reduce the risk of wildfire.
- (3) To reduce the wildfire hazard for existing development.

4.10.2 Policies

- (1) Property owners and developers are encouraged to implement Fire Smart principles for land development to reduce the risk of wildfire. For example, property owners are encouraged to:
 - (a) use non-combustible roofing and siding materials,
 - (b) keep roofs clean from combustible debris,
 - (c) keep combustible materials such as firewood and sheds at least 10 metres away from a principal building, and
 - (d) locate buildings away from the top of sloped lands.
- (2) Applicants for rezoning to allow subdivision shall be required to consider “fireproofing” and “FireSmart” principles in their subdivision design. For example, new developments should be designed to provide adequate emergency vehicle access and alternate escape routes.
- (3) Provincial agencies are encouraged to implement strategies to assess and reduce the risk of wildfire on their lands.

- (4) The Regional District encourages the Provincial Approving Officer to implement “fireproofing” and “FireSmart” standards for subdivisions.

4.11 Economic Development

It is recognized that in order to achieve the goals contained in the Plan the region must provide opportunities for the creation of a vibrant, diverse, and sustainable economy. To do so requires maintenance and enhancement of the region’s quality of life, as well as its natural, cultural, and built amenities, thus ensuring compatibility between future economic activity and the rural character of the Plan area. As noted in the Plan, industrial and commercial activity is supported in select areas and within the community of Topley, the District of Houston and the Village of Granisle. However, the Plan recognizes the importance of a healthy home based business sector to the regional economy.

The Plan supports the maintenance of existing, and the increased establishment of new, home based businesses that are compatible with the rural residential and agricultural character of the area, and do not negatively impact the quality of life of area residents.

4.11.1 Objectives

- (1) To concentrate commercial and light industrial development in existing centres of activity, and to direct most of that activity within the community of Topley, the District of Houston and the Village of Granisle.
- (2) To increase the attractiveness of the Plan area to new residents, entrepreneurs, and business by protecting and enhancing the aspects of the social, cultural, natural, and built environment that contribute to the quality of life of residents.
- (3) To support home based business activity that fits within the rural character of the area and does not negatively impact resident quality of life.

4.11.2 Policies

- (1) Home based business activity that is compatible with the rural residential character of the Plan area shall be supported.
- (2) The Regional District especially encourages consulting, technology and information-based home based businesses to locate in the Plan area.
- (3) The Regional District encourages service providers to improve cell phone service and high-speed internet service in the areas where this service is limited or non-existent.
- (4) The opportunity to establish home based business with a personal service, retail, or industrial character shall be limited to protect rural residential areas

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from impacts associated with noise and traffic, and to help protect the integrity of existing commercial and industrial areas.

4.12 Greenhouse Gas Emissions

The Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako recognizes that increasing emissions of human caused greenhouse gases (GHG) such as carbon dioxide and methane are affecting the Earth's climate, and the effects of climate change are evident across British Columbia.

In 2009 the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako signed the Climate Action Charter (CAC), which is an agreement between signatory local governments and the province which outlines the commitments and responsibilities of the province and local governments as they work together towards reduced greenhouse gas emissions.

Through the CAC the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako agreed to develop strategies and take actions to achieve the following goals.

- By 2012, become carbon neutral in respect of operations, recognizing that solid waste facilities regulated under *the Environmental Management Act* are not included in operations for the purposes of the CAC;
- Measure and report on our community's GHG emissions profile;
- And create complete, compact, more energy efficient rural and urban communities.

Section 473 (3) of the *Local Government Act* states that Official Community Plans adopted must include targets for the reduction of GHG emissions in the area covered by the Plan, and policies and actions of the local government proposed with respect to achieving those targets.

The Province of British Columbia completed the Community Energy and Emissions Inventory (CEEI) in 2007 and 2012. The data provided by the CEEI initiative does not provide the information necessary for the establishment of a baseline, or future measure, of the community wide GHG emissions generated in each Electoral Area. Therefore, the data is not appropriate for the establishment of bottom up or pragmatic targets. Area specific, accurate, and measurable data regarding emission sources and quantity, especially with regards to transportation, are necessary to identify GHG reduction targets that have any meaning with respect to measurement and achievability. However, the CEEI data can potentially be used to quantify current and future patterns of energy used by building type and on road transportation, provided that future CEEI data is comparable in future years. This would serve as an indicator of the intensity of energy used and GHG emitted in the region.

The Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako does not have the financial capacity to undertake community energy emissions inventories that are an improvement over the provincial CEEI initiative. Therefore, the remaining option to satisfy the province with regards to Section

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471 (3) of the *Local Government Act*, and to ensure the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako remains eligible for provincial grant funding, is to establish visionary or top down targets which are not based upon any analysis regarding achievability, and are not intended to be tracked or achieved locally. However, these targets reflect a commitment to action, and they are backed up by concrete community goals and objectives regarding the reduction of GHG emissions.

4.12.1 OCP Visionary Targets and Action

To comply with section 473 (3) of the *Local Government Act* and to meet the commitments under the CAC, the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako accepts the following provincial GHG reduction targets as the Regional District's visionary targets:

- By 2030, the province will reduce its GHG emissions by 40 per cent, compared to 2007 levels.
- By 2040, the province will reduce its GHG emissions by 60 per cent, compared to 2007 levels.
- By 2050, the province will reduce its GHG emissions by 80 per cent, compared to below 2007 levels.

The Plan seeks to reduce GHG emissions in a manner that promotes and secures the region's long-term economic prosperity, protects the environment, and ensures that the negative effects of climate change are minimized for the benefit of the residents of the region, and British Columbia.

In the rural areas of the Regional District, the primary way the Regional District can influence community wide GHG emissions is through the establishment of objectives and policy for development and land use patterns that are more energy efficient, result in more self-sustaining communities, and limit unnecessary rural residential sprawl. This involves policy relating to increased public awareness of issues and options regarding energy use. These objectives and policies are identified in Sections 4.12.2 and 4.12.3 below.

The Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako is committed to doing its part to achieve reductions in GHG emissions; however, it is recognized that success in reducing community wide GHG emissions is largely dependent upon technological change and the actions of senior levels of government, and their agencies and corporations. The majority of the GHG emissions that are generated in the rural areas of the Regional District are subject to limited influence by the Board of the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako.

4.12.2 Objectives

- (1) The Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako will work towards reducing Electoral Area G community GHG emissions by encouraging, facilitating, and supporting development and land use patterns that are more energy efficient, that result in more self-sustaining communities, and that limit future unnecessary rural residential sprawl.
- (2) The Regional District will promote energy efficiency, energy security and reduced energy costs.
- (3) The Regional District will work cooperatively with senior levels of government on their initiatives to reduce GHG emissions where meaningful consultation is initiated.

4.12.3 Policies

- (1) Incentives offered by utilities and senior government to reduce residential energy use will be promoted.
- (2) Residents and local businesses shall be encouraged to investigate and adopt new technologies and best practices to reduce GHG emissions.
- (3) The use of sustainability checklists shall be considered for use as part of building permit, rezoning, development variance permit, and temporary use permit applications to raise awareness of options to reduce GHG emissions and reduce the impact of development on the environment.
- (4) Renewable energy generation such as biomass, geothermal heating, solar power, and wind turbines shall be encouraged, where it is shown that negative impacts to local air quality can be mitigated.
- (5) The objectives identified in Section 4.12.2 of this bylaw are achieved through the implementation of the following land use and development policies:
 - (a) Within the Agricultural Designation, the Policies listed in Section 3.1.2 support the protection, preservation, and expansion of agriculture in the Plan area.
 - (b) Within the Commercial Designation, Policy 3.2.2 (1) encourages commercial uses that exceed a scale and scope needed to serve the local community to be established within the District of Houston, the Village of Granisle and the community of Topley.

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- (c) Within the Commercial Designation, Policy 3.2.2 (2) supports commercial areas for neighbourhood services subject to certain criteria.
- (d) Home based businesses are supported throughout the Plan with Policy 3.1.2 (10), Policies 3.2.2 (4) and (5), Policy 3.4.2 (3), and Policies 4.11.2 (1), (2), and (4).
- (e) Within the Industrial Designation, Policy 3.3.2 (1) encourages new light industrial uses to establish within the boundaries of the District of Houston and the Village of Granisle.
- (f) Within the Rural Resource Designation, Policy 3.7.2 (2) allows only a very limited amount of low-density residential use.
- (g) Within the Rural Resource Designation, Policy 3.7.2 (6) supports the development of wind farms intended to generate power for sale.
- (h) Policies 3.4.2 (1) and (9) and 4.2.2 (1) (a) promote the use of alternative development practices such as lot averaging and bare land strata development.
- (i) Policy 4.2.2 (6) supports efforts to protect healthy air quality, and surface and ground water resources on a local, regional and provincial scale.
- (j) Policy 4.5.2 (1) encourages housing in proximity to transportation infrastructure to be developed within the District of Houston and the Village of Granisle.
- (k) Policy 4.7.2 (1) directs urban scale development requiring community water and sewer services, except as appropriate for bare land strata development, into municipalities where such services can be provided as an extension to existing systems.

5. ASSOCIATED MAPS



5.1 Interpretation of the Land Use Designation Map

The Land Use Designation Map attached hereto as Schedule “B” indicates the general location and distribution of major land use designations in the Plan area. The boundaries of the designations are approximate and convey the relationship between principal uses. These boundaries will be defined in detail in the implementing bylaws.

5.2 Land Use Designation Explanations

Unless otherwise restricted in this Plan, lands with the following land use designations may be considered for rezoning to allow the following types of uses:

Agriculture (AG): In areas so designated, the Small Holdings (H1), the Large Holdings (H2), the Agricultural (Ag1), and the Rural Resource (RR1) and the Agricultural Industry (M3) zones, or new zones with similar uses, may be considered.

Commercial (C): In areas so designated, any of the Commercial zones, or new zones with similar uses, may be considered.

Industrial (I): In areas so designated, any of the Industrial zones, or new zones with similar uses, may be considered.

Rural Residential (RR): In areas so designated, the Residential zones (with the exception of the Hudson Bay Mountain-specific zones) the Small Holdings (H1), the Small Holdings-Additional Dwelling (H1A), the Small Holdings Zone – Industrial Shop (H1B), and the Large Holdings (H2) zones, or new zones with similar uses, may be considered. For lakeshore areas the Waterfront I (R3), Waterfront II (R4), Small Holdings (H1), and Large Holdings (H2) zones, or new zones with similar uses, may be more specifically considered.

Civic Institutional (C/I): In areas so designated, Civic/Institutional (P1), Special Civic/Institutional (P1A), Recreation (P2), Airport (A1), zones, or new zones with similar uses, may be considered.

Parks and Recreation (P): In areas so designated, Rural Resource (RR1), Civic/Institutional (P1), and Recreation (P2), Special Recreation (P2A) zones, or new zones with similar uses, may be considered.

Resource (RE): In areas so designated, the Rural Resource (RR1), the Large Holdings (H2), the Agricultural (Ag1), the Recreation (P2), Special Recreation (P2A), Wind Farm (WF) zones, or new zones with similar uses, may be considered.

5.3 Interpretation of the Ecological and Wildlife Values Map

The Ecological and Wildlife Values Map attached hereto as Schedule “C” indicates the general location and distribution of major ecological and wildlife habitat features in the Plan area. The intention of this map is to identify areas where specific ecological and wildlife habitat values will be considered during development review processes.

5.4 Ecological and Wildlife Values Explanations

The features represented in the Ecological and Wildlife Values Map were identified through the Morice Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) and the Bulkley LRMP processes. The Plan area also includes the Kispiox LRMP and the West Babine Sustainable Resource Management Plan (SRMP), however they were not included because of the lack of development in those areas. The following explanations are summarized from these documents:

No Harvesting Zone (Morice LRMP): Certain areas have been designated as no timber harvesting areas. Commercial timber harvesting is not permitted in these areas by the Morice LRMP.

Community Recreation Forests (Morice LRMP): Both the Houston and Granisle community forests were established in the early 1990s to benefit the local communities through integrated resource management with a focus on recreation. In 2008, the Houston Community Forest became the Dungate Community Forest, with a total area of 15,569 hectares. The Granisle Community Forest became the Babine Lake Community Forest Society in 2011, when it was expanded to almost 2,344 hectares. The Morice Mountain Nordic Ski Trails take up 3,000 hectares of the Dungate Community Forest in the form of a recreational reserve. Both community forests contain multi-use trails as well as opportunities for fishing, picnicking, swimming, canoeing and camping.

Atna Lake Ecological Reserve (Morice LRMP): The focus of this ecological reserve is for conservation of old growth costal western hemlock and riparian ecosystems near Atna Lake. It excludes recreation features adjacent to the lake and river.

Grease Trail (Morice LRMP): This trail is of historical significance to First Nations as a travel and trade route and remains a significant travel route connecting the communities of Takla Landing and Old Hazelton. The Grease Trail has high cultural and recreational value and also functions as an important wildlife corridor.

Morice Mountain (Morice LRMP): Morice Mountain is a significant natural feature that has high recreation values and provides important mountain goat and grizzly bear habitat. This area can be accessed from the Morice Mountain Cross Country Ski Trail system.

Nadina/Owen (Morice LRMP): This area is of great cultural importance to First Nations and contains a high concentration of cultural and traditional sites. The area also has high timber values and supports guide outfitting, hunting, trapping, and recreation opportunities.

Swan Lake/China Knows (Morice LRMP): Commonly known as “China Knows” this prominent feature characterized by a rugged north-facing cliff, is known by the Wet'suwet'en as Tse Zuhl, meaning “Rock Neck” [BC Geographical Names; secondary source. 2025, February. Accessed online December 18, 2025]. The cliff itself does not lie within this area however many features associated with it are, such as the Old Man Lake

protected area. The area has high recreational value and is used extensively for range and other purposes. The Swan Lake area contains high First Nations cultural values and a rare Saskatoon plant community.

Parks and Protected Areas (Morice LRMP): Protected areas are managed by the provincial government under the Morice LRMP for their significant natural, recreational and cultural heritage values. Commercial logging and mineral and energy exploration and development are not permitted in protected areas; however, many other existing activities can continue, subject to the management plan for each protected area prescribed by the Morice LRMP.

Mountain Goat Range (Morice LRMP): Approximately 1,100 of the BC mountain goat population live in the Morice LRMP area. In British Columbia, as of 2015, the mountain goat is considered a “blue listed species”, in recognition of localized declines and moderate and imminent threats posed by disturbance derived from human activities. However, as of 2015, the mountain goat is classed as S3, which means that it is of special concern, vulnerable to extirpation or extinction. The Morice LRMP endeavours to ensure adequate foraging habitat to ensure a healthy and sustainable population of mountain goats across their present range within the Plan area and maintain functional goat movement corridors that minimize the risk of mountain goat displacement and mortality.

Telkwa Caribou Habitat and Forested Telkwa Caribou Habitat (Morice LRMP): As of 2014, the caribou population within the Plan area are federally considered endangered and have a recovery strategy developed under the *Species at Risk Act*. In 2023, the Telkwa herd consisted of approximately 31 animals and appeared to be increasing in the last five to nine years after a decrease over the previous 21 to 27 years. Generally, the herd is not migratory, but habits vary between years and animals. Caribou habitat is carefully managed to improve the forage and decrease human impacts, predation and disease transfer from cattle.

Sensitive Ecosystem 50 Metre Buffer and Core Zones (Bulkley LRMP): These are recommended management boundaries around identified sensitive values. The core is the actual sensitive habitat or site, and the buffer identifies the area around it that needs to be managed with special care or added to the core to preserve the value.

Landscape Corridors (Bulkley LRMP): These areas were identified as part of the Bulkley LRMP as management zones for maintaining natural patterns of connectivity and ecosystem function. They are part of the larger, strategic, landscape-level management plan.

5.5 Interpretation of the Recreational Values Map

The Recreational Values Map, attached hereto as Schedule “D” indicates the general location and distribution of major recreational features in the Plan area. The intent of this map is to identify areas where specific recreational values will be considered during

the development review process.

Recreation Trails (Morice Land Use Resource Map [LRMP]): Existing recreation trails identified by the Morice LRMP are shown on the Ecological and Wildlife Values map. One of the objectives of the Morice LRMP is to maintain the integrity and functionality of trails as per specific guidelines, respecting traditional First Nations trail networks.

Recreation Features (Morice LRMP): The extensive recreation features within the Plan area are displayed by type and include access and fish sites, anchorages, boat launches, cabins, developed and other campsites, shoreline and historical features, fossils, guide cabins, lake landing sites, lookouts and viewpoints, parking, spawning channels, trail heads, and waterfalls.

5.6 Recreational Values Explanations

The features represented in the Recreational Values Map, attached hereto as Schedule "D", include those identified during the OCP planning process, the RDBN recreation inventory and in data provided by the province.



6. IMPLEMENTATION



Following the formal adoption of this Plan several options are available to ensure that the Board's goals and objectives are achieved. Implementation shall be the ongoing responsibility of the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Board of Directors, and its actions must be consistent with the Plan. The document also serves as a guide and resource for Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako staff and other levels of government in their planning and decision-making processes. This section identifies some of these mechanisms for implementation and considers their application in the Plan area.

6.1 Zoning, Development and Subdivision Control

- (1) Development proposals that require rezoning or other discretionary approval by the Regional District shall be evaluated in accordance with the intent and direction provided by the policies in this Plan.
- (2) The final approval of subdivisions remains with the Provincial Approving Officer who shall have regard for the policies of this Plan in consideration of applications.
- (3) Generally, the Regional District shall, as the need and opportunity arise, provide input to and liaise with other agencies to ensure that development proposals reflect the land use designations, policies and objectives of this Plan.

6.2 Temporary Use Permits

- (1) Temporary Use Permits may be issued, pursuant to Section 492 of the *Local Government Act*, throughout the Plan area, where:
 - (a) the proposed temporary use will not create an amount of traffic that will adversely affect the natural environment, or rural character of the area;
 - (b) the environment would not be negatively affected by the proposed temporary use;
 - (c) the need for security in the form of an irrevocable letter of credit with an automatic extension clause has been considered to ensure that the required decommissioning and reclamation is complete;
 - (d) the proposed temporary use will not have adverse effects on neighbouring land uses or property owners;
 - (e) the proposed temporary use does not require a significant amount of capital investment in a particular location; and,

- (f) the proposed temporary use has the support of the Agricultural Land Commission if the land is within the ALR.

6.3 Development Proposals Contrary to the Plan

- (1) Development proposals that require rezoning or other discretionary approval by the Regional District and are contrary to the objectives, policies or land use designations of this Plan shall not be approved.
- (2) Proposals to amend the Plan must be approved by the Regional District Board of Directors pursuant to the requirements of the *Local Government Act*, and subject to any required provincial approvals.

6.4 Agricultural Land Commission

- (1) The Regional District Board recognizes the Agricultural Land Commission's mandate for the preservation of agricultural land and the encouragement of agriculture. It is also recognized that all lands within the ALR are subject to the *Agricultural Land Commission Act*, its orders and regulations.
- (2) Proposals for non-adhering residential use, non-farm use, subdivision, inclusion, soil use for placement of fill or removal of soil, transportation and utility use, and exclusion of lands within the ALR require approval from the Agricultural Land Commission. In commenting to the Agricultural Land Commission, the Regional District will have regard for the provisions of this Plan, the potential impact on the agricultural viability of the subject property and surrounding area, and the suitability of the land for agriculture.

6.5 Building Inspection

- (1) Building inspection is a requirement in parts of the Plan area. Building permits cannot be issued for developments that are contrary to the Zoning Bylaw.
- (2) The consideration of expansion of Building Inspection services shall occur for areas where notable development is occurring. The consideration of a reduction of Building Inspection services shall occur where there is a notable decline in development occurring.

6.6 Water and Sewer Approvals

- (1) The provincial government regulates water and sewer systems through legislation such as the *Drinking Water Protection Act*, the *Public Health Act* and the regulations thereto.

- (2) The Regional District supports these enactments and expects that all water and sewer systems within the Plan area will comply with applicable regulations.

6.7 Collaborative Planning

- (1) In order to facilitate orderly urban growth, the Regional District will work with the District of Houston and the Village of Granisle as necessary to develop land use strategies for lands identified for future incorporation into the municipalities.
- (2) Where the Regional District is addressing a land use issue that is adjacent to, or potentially impacting, the District of Houston or the Village of Granisle, the Regional District shall consult with the municipality as appropriate.
- (3) Where the Regional District is addressing a land use issue that is within, adjacent to, or potentially impacting, an established neighbourhood, the Regional District shall consult with those established neighbourhood groups, as appropriate.
- (4) Where the District of Houston or the Village of Granisle is addressing a land use issue that is adjacent to, or potentially impacting, the Regional District, the municipality is encouraged to consult with the Regional District, as appropriate.
- (5) Where the Regional District is addressing a land use issue that is adjacent to, or potentially impacting, First Nations communities, the Regional District shall consult with those First Nations, as appropriate.
- (6) Where a First Nation is addressing a land use issue that is adjacent to, or potentially impacting, the Regional District, the First Nation is encouraged to consult with the Regional District, as appropriate.
- (7) The Regional District encourages opportunities to undertake collaborative planning and consultation processes with other local governments, First Nations, provincial ministries, and other agencies and groups to better achieve the goals of this Plan.