

REGIONAL DISTRICT
OF BULKLEY & NECHAKO

HOUSTON, TOPLEY, GRANISLE RURAL OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN

BYLAW No. 1622, 2011 Schedule "A"

Consolidated December 2023

Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako PLANNING DEPARTMENT

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List of Zoning Amendments Bylaw 1622,2011

#	Bylaw	Type	Adoption	Description	Folio
1	1757	Map	Feb 2016	Redesignated from Commercial (C) to Rural Residential (RR).	755/12686.010 755/12692.000
2	1972	Map	Apr 2022	That a ± 2.02 ha portion of these lands be redesignated from "Resource" (RE) to "Rural Residential" (RR).	755/12798.000
3	2003	Text	Nov 2023	Addition of Section 6.8 "Parkland Dedication"	N/A

Please note that this document (Schedule “A”) is one of three parts of the Official Community Plan. This Plan also includes the Land Use Designation Map (Schedule “B”) and the Ecological and Wildlife Values Map (Schedule “C”). Both maps can be viewed at the Regional District office. If you wish to obtain a copy of either map, large format copying charges apply.

The Land Use Designation Map is also available on the Regional District’s website at:

www.rdbn.bc.ca.

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SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose

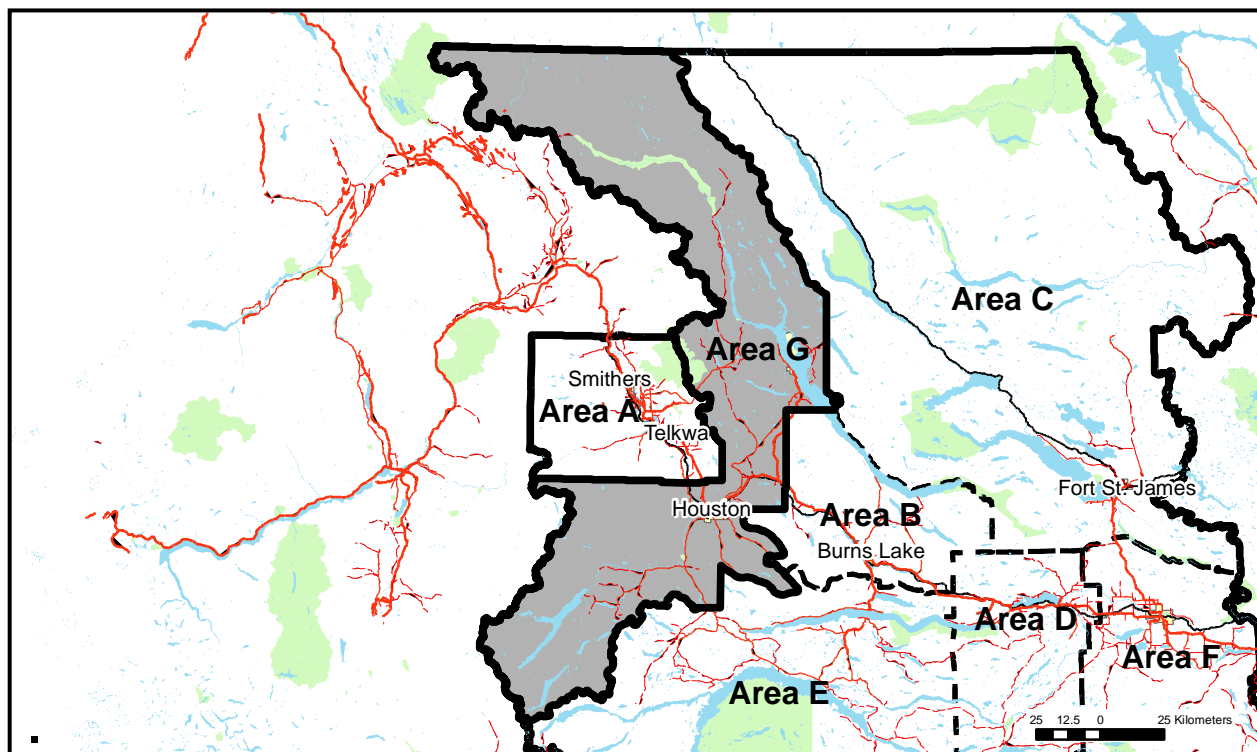
The *Houston, Topley, Granisle Rural Official Community Plan* is a bylaw which is adopted by the Board of Directors of the Regional District of Bulkley Nechako and approved by the Minister of Community, Sport and Cultural Development. The Plan is for Electoral Area “G” (Houston Rural) which is shown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

The Houston, Topley, Granisle Rural Official Community Plan endeavours to identify the rural community’s 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 and other bylaws. The Plan contains the community’s vision for the future, and states how the community aims 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 be in compliance with the intent and direction provided by the policies in the Plan.

Map No. 1



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 an extremely diverse area where the population is spread out with several areas of concentration, such as Topley, Topley Landing, Smithers Landing, Perow, and near 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 abundant other outdoor recreation opportunities such as hunting, hiking and bird watching. There are several resorts and wilderness retreats as well as rustic campgrounds.

The area contains the municipalities of Houston and Granisle, and unincorporated communities at Topley and Topley Landing. The Yekooche First Nation, Lake Babine First Nation, Wet'suwet'en First Nation, and the Office of the Wet'suwet'en identify traditional territory within Electoral Area G.

According to the Statistics Canada Census for 2006, the population of Electoral Area G declined by 3.6% from 1,099 to 1,059 persons between the years 2001 to 2006. It is noted that there is common acceptance by Regional District residents that there was a significant census undercount throughout the region. It is believed that generally the population has been relatively stable, but may have experienced a slight decline in recent years.

The municipality of Houston is the service, entertainment, and business center 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 2006 the population of Houston declined by 11.6% from 3,577 to 3,163 persons between the years 2001 to 2006. According to BC Statistics the projected population of Houston was 2,958 persons in 2009.

The municipality of Granisle is an important residential and commercial centre within Electoral Area G which was originally founded to house the families of miners working in the nearby copper mines. According to the Statistics Canada Census for 2006 the population of Granisle increased by 3.0% from 353 to 364 persons between the years 2001 to 2006. According to BC Statistics the projected population of Granisle was 396 persons in 2009.

The forest industry dominates the local economy and the two mills in Houston, Canfor and Houston Forest Products, are among the largest mills in the province. In addition, there are a number of small value added wood products manufacturing operations.

Electoral Area G is rich in mineral resources. In 1997, Huckleberry Mines, an open pit copper mining operation, opened 125 km south of Houston. The mine directly employs 185 people plus contractors. Because of its distance from Houston, the mine operates a camp with a four-day on, four-day off shift rotation. The majority of the Huckleberry employees and their families live in the District of Houston and the surrounding area.

According to the Statistics Canada Census for 2006 the labour force for Electoral Area G consists of 615 persons. Employment is broken down by occupation type as follows.

- 38.2% - trades, transport and equipment operators
- 16.3% - sales and service
- 12.2% - processing, manufacturing, and utilities
- 10.6% - business, finance, and administration
- 8.1% - primary industry
- 6.5% - management
- 3.3% - health occupations
- 1.6% - natural and applied sciences
- 1.6% - social science, education, government service, religion
- 1.6% - arts, sport, recreation, culture

The agriculture and resource based industries are responsible for 34.2% of employment in the area, followed by manufacturing industries at 19.7% and business services at 12.0%.

1.3 First Nations Communities

1.3.1 Lake Babine Nation

The Lake Babine Nation has membership of 2,271 people both on-reserve and off-reserve. The total population on reserve is 1,349 band members on the three main communities which are: the Woyenne Reserve in Burns Lake; the Tachet Reserve near Granisle; and the Fort Babine Reserve at the head of Babine Lake. The Lake Babine Nation identifies traditional territory within the plan area and has numerous reserve lands within the plan area.

The Lake Babine Nation's website states that the Woyenne Reserve has approximately 940 residents, which is a marked difference from the BC Census Data that claims a population of 614. The Woyenne Reserve is the largest of the 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.

Fort Babine (Wit'at) has approximately 60 permanent residents, an elementary school, a health clinic, a water treatment plant and a satellite band office.

Donald's Landing was established at the south end of Babine Lake and Old Fort was established at the north end of Babine Lake as summer communities.

1.3.2 Wet'suwet'en First Nation

The Wet'suwet'en First Nation is located at the Palling Indian Reserve No. 1 to the west of the unincorporated community Decker Lake. The First Nation was

formerly known as the Broman Lake Indian Band. The Wet'suwet'en have one reserve in the plan area at Owen Lake.

The band has approximately 150 members on and off Reserve lands. The Wet'suwet'en First Nation was formerly part of the Omineca Band. In 1984 the Omineca Band split into the Broman Lake and Nee-Tahi-Buhn bands.

1.3.3 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.

1.3.4 Skin Tyee

The Skin Tyee Nation has a membership of 147 people both on-reserve and off-reserve. The main community and band office of the Skin Tyee Nation are located at Uncha Lake, which is south of Francois Lake and outside the Plan area. The Skin Tyee Nation identifies traditional territory within the plan area but does not have any reserve lands within the plan area.

1.3.5 Yekooche First Nation

The Yekooche First Nation identifies traditional territory within the plan area, but does not have any reserve lands within the plan area. The Yekooche have 217 band members, and approximately 93 live on reserve. The Yekooche First Nation includes 4 reserves with a total of 379.7 hectares northwest of Fort St. James.

1.4 Legislative Authority

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

Lands within the Plan area are also 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*, *Health Act*, *Land Act*, *Mines Act*, *Environmental Management Act*, and the *Agricultural Land Commission Act*. Certain aspects of the Plan are required to be in accordance with Provincial legislation and interests.

1.5 Plan Review and Amendments

New information and changing circumstances must be continually monitored in order to ensure that the Plan continues to be current, and that the goals and policies are relevant. A comprehensive review of the Plan shall be undertaken every five to ten years depending on the actual conditions which occur to influence land use.

Revisions 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 revisions 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 broad land use issue as part of the next planned comprehensive review.

1.6 The Planning Process

In January 2011 the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Board of Directors directed staff to proceed with the review process for the Houston, Topley, Granisle Rural Official Community Plan 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 Board, and various Provincial Ministries. An open house was held on March 28, 2011 in Houston to introduce the review process to the public and to solicit participation on a working group to assist in the review process and the drafting of a new Plan. At the open house the Regional District also undertook a survey to obtain public input regarding the issues that require attention in the plan.

The Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, Northern Health Authority, Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Forests Lands and Natural Resource Operations, Ministry of Energy, the Ministry of Natural Resource Operations, Department of Fisheries and Oceans, District of Houston, Village of Granisle, Community Futures Nadina, Houston Chamber of Commerce, Bulkley Valley Morice Heritage Museum Society, Houston Snowmobile Club, Morice Mountain Marksman Association, Morice Mountain Nordic Ski Club, Topley Community Club, Lake Babine First Nation (Natoot'en), Wet'suwet'en First Nation, Office of the Wet'suwet'en, Skin Tyee Band, and Yekooche First Nation were asked to provide a representative to participate on the working group. The Area G Advisory Planning Commission was also invited to participate on the working group.

Several members 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 2011 on April 11, May 11, and May 24. 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.

The draft was then taken to the public at two additional open houses held on August 15, 2011 in Topley and August 17, 2011 in Houston for review and input. Based on this input the draft plan was further refined to reflect the goals and values of the community. The final draft of the plan was then referred to First Nations, community groups, the District of Houston, the School Board and various Provincial Ministries for final review prior to Board consideration.

“Houston, Topley, Granisle Rural Official Community Plan Bylaw No. 1622, 2011” was then forwarded to the Regional District Board with a recommendation for consideration of 1st and 2nd readings. This was followed by a Public Hearing, 3rd reading of the bylaw, approval by the Bylaw by the Minister of Community, Sport and Cultural Development, and adoption.

SECTION 2 – PLAN VISION AND GOALS

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, 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 and a healthy environment.

A more diversified economy is becoming increasingly important in order to ensure that the area remains vibrant and residents enjoy economic and employment stability. The communities realize that being able to offer newcomers to the area a high quality of life 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 resident's 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 community.

The Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako is committed to working with local communities in fulfilling its role to address climate change and to reducing 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

The area encompassed by the Houston, Topley, Granisle Rural Official Community Plan includes a number of characteristics that are recognized by the community as being important to the long-term vitality of the Region. The Plan area's natural beauty, social environment, and economic opportunities attract a diversity of people, business and industry, and these attributes need to be protected and enhanced. The Plan 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.

- 2.2.1** Land use patterns and economic activities which do not compromise the rural character of the Plan area.
- 2.2.2** 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.
- 2.2.3** Protection and preservation of farm land and soil having agricultural capability, and the appropriate utilization of that land for agricultural purposes.
- 2.2.4** Protection and stewardship of environmentally sensitive attributes (including fish, riparian and wildlife habitat; and quality and quantity of ground and surface water).
- 2.2.5** 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.
- 2.2.6** Maintenance of a balance between the regulation of land use to protect community values and the desire of local residents for a lifestyle with a high degree of self expression respecting use of their property.
- 2.2.7** Facilitation of opportunities for economic development and diversification.
- 2.2.8** Directing large scale commercial development, and urban type development to the municipalities of Houston and Granisle.
- 2.2.9** 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.
- 2.2.10** An appropriate mix of uses that increases the community's independence and results in a reduction in motorized vehicle dependency and energy use.

2.3 Topley

Topley is a small town site located at the junction of Highway 16 and Highway 118 approximately 26 km east of the District of Houston. The unincorporated community is supported primarily by employment from forestry and local business. The local elementary school and automotive repair shop were recently closed.

The community contains a convenience store, restaurant, motel, post office, community hall, outdoor recreation area, volunteer fire department, church, and approximately 118 persons living in 41 homes.

2.3.1 Topley Goals

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 km 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 DFO fisheries operation, a barge landing, an outdoor recreation area, and approximately 83 homes. Topley Landing is located in close proximity to the First Nations community of Tachet.

The community of Topley Landing experiences a significant influx of tourists during the summer months. Of particular note is the Sockeye fishery open from August 1st to September 15th that draws an exceptionally large number of campers and boaters to the area. Community residents have expressed concern over the capacity of local recreation facilities and the enforcement of provincial and federal environmental regulations. This issue is also addressed in Sections 4.2.2(19) and (20) of the plan.

2.4.1 Topley Landing Goals

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.

SECTION 3 – OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

The Regional District of Bulkley Nechako is committed to achieving 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. 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.
- (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.

3.1.2 Policies

- (1) Agriculture, grazing, and other compatible uses of land provided within the *Agricultural Land Commission Act* 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 5 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) Applications for exclusions, subdivisions, and non-farm uses to allow industrial development within the Agricultural Land Reserve may be supported if:
 - (a) there is limited agricultural potential within the proposed area;
 - (b) soil conditions are not suitable for agriculture;
 - (c) neighbouring uses will not be compromised;
 - (d) there is a demonstrated need for the proposed development; and,
 - (e) the community benefits outweigh the value of the land for agriculture.
- (7) Subdivision within the Agricultural Land Reserve (other than home site severances approved by the Agricultural Land Commission) shall be avoided. However, applications for subdivision within the Agricultural Land Reserve may be supported if:
 - (a) there is limited agricultural potential within the proposed area;
 - (b) soil conditions are not suitable for agriculture; and
 - (c) neighbouring uses will not be compromised.
- (8) The inclusion of land in the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) is supported provided the reason for inclusion is based solely on the arability of that land.
- (9) 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.
- (10) The Regional District supports the implementation and enforcement of the *Farm Practices Protection Act*, the *Code of Agricultural Practice for Waste Management* and applicable provincial government environmental guidelines for agricultural producers.
- (11) Home based businesses, including bed and breakfasts, operated in accordance with the requirements of the Agricultural Land Reserve are supported.
- (12) The Province is encouraged to implement innovative approaches to making appropriately located Crown lands available and affordable for agricultural use.

- (13) 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.
- (14) The planting of trees on non-arable land within the Agricultural Designation is encouraged.
- (15) 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 Commercial 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) Significant commercial uses 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, and that area is not already adequately serviced.
 - (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 Agricultural Land Reserve (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 Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR).
- (4) Home based businesses are supported subject to restrictions on size, outdoor storage, employees and signs.
- (5) Bed and breakfasts are encouraged throughout the Plan area subject to the following criteria:
- (a) any bed and breakfast rooms shall be located within the principal dwelling unit on a parcel;
 - (b) the number of rooms available for guest use shall vary depending upon the characteristics of the parcel but in no case shall exceed five (5) bedrooms; and,
 - (c) the sewage disposal system is of the appropriate capacity for the size of bed and breakfast.

- (6) Appropriate minimum parcel sizes for commercial uses will be required.
- (7) The establishment of permanent greenbelt buffers along parcel boundaries to provide a physical separation between commercial uses of land and adjacent agricultural lands is encouraged.

3.3 Industrial (I) Designation

Industrial development has been limited within the rural areas in an attempt to focus industrial activity in the municipality of Houston. 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 any significant negative impact on the natural environment.

3.3.2 Policies

- (1) New light industrial uses will be encouraged to establish within the boundaries of the District of Houston.
- (2) The Regional District Board may consider designating additional areas for industrial uses subject to the following criteria:
 - (a) all existing industrial land is developed or it is demonstrated that the designated industrial areas are unsuitable for the proposed use;
 - (b) the proposed industrial development will not create an amount of traffic, noise, or other impact that will adversely affect the rural character of the area;
 - (c) the proposed industrial development will be developed in a manner that has minimal negative impacts on the environment;
 - (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.
- (4) The establishment of permanent greenbelt buffers along parcel boundaries to provide a physical separation between industrial uses of land and adjacent agricultural land is encouraged.
- (5) The Regional Board may consider designating additional areas for light industrial use near the 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 uses without an Industrial designation.
- (7) The land described as L A DL 2638 R5C PL 4072 EXC PLS 5485 & 5168 and L 3 DL 2638 R5C PL 4704 located south of Richfield Loop Road may be considered for limited light industrial uses that utilize the existing railway siding 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 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 new housing forms, such as bare land stratas, that fit the character of rural areas to allow rural residents greater opportunity to age in place.

3.4.2 Policies

- (1) Residential (fee simple and bare land strata) subdivisions, and recreational and other unobtrusive uses will be permitted in the Rural Residential designation. Limited forms of agriculture may be permitted within the implementing zoning bylaw.
- (2) 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.
- (3) 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.
- (4) 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.
- (5) Rezoning applications to allow a freehold subdivision that relies on privately operated sewer or water systems shall not be supported.
- (6) 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 2 hectares (4.94 acres) of Rural Residential designated land for each strata parcel proposed (for example a proposal for 5 strata parcels would require a parent parcel of 10 hectares (24.7 acres));
 - (b) a covenant restricting further subdivision of the parcel is encouraged; and
 - (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.
- (7) Only one dwelling per parcel shall be permitted on parcels that are smaller than 4 ha (9.88 acres). Not more than two dwellings shall be permitted on parcels that are larger than 4 ha (9.88 acres).
- (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 0.4 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.
- (10) 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.
- (11) 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.
- (12) The development of new Manufactured Home Parks is encouraged to occur within the community of Topley and discouraged throughout the remaining plan area. Manufactured Home Parks are also directed to locate within the District of Houston or the Village of Granisle where water and sewer services are more available.

3.5 Lakeshore (L) Designation

The Lakeshore (L) Designation is intended to accommodate the demand for residential development in select areas in close proximity to lakes in the Plan area. Residents value the peacefulness and the natural setting that exists near areas designated Lakeshore. Not all lands adjacent to the lakes are designated for Lakeshore development. The lands available are limited to allow in-fill development at a scale that will not impact the character of existing Lakeshore development or other neighbourhoods. The density and scale of development is also limited to ensure that the environmental integrity of the lakes are not negatively impacted, and to avoid the necessity for the establishment of development permit areas to further control lakeshore development.

3.5.1 Objectives

- (1) To provide opportunities for lakeshore residential lots that fit the existing character of the Plan area.
- (2) To ensure future development does not have a negative impact on the natural environment.
- (3) To protect and enhance the quality of life associated with existing and new Lakeshore and rural residential development.

3.5.2 Policies

- (1) Low to moderate density residential (fee simple and bare land strata) subdivisions, recreational and other unobtrusive uses will be permitted in the Lakeshore designation.
- (2) 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 or the character of the area.
- (3) The Regional District will not take responsibility for the operation, maintenance or funding of any new water or sewer system associated with Lakeshore development.
- (4) 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.
- (5) Rezoning applications to allow a freehold subdivision that relies on privately operated sewer or water systems shall not be supported.

- (6) 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 subdivision includes less than 15 strata parcels;
 - (b) the size of the parent parcel is a minimum of 1.2 hectares (2.96 acres) of Lakeshore designated land for each strata parcel proposed (for example a proposal for 5 strata parcels would require a parent parcel of 6 hectares (14.8 acres));
 - (c) a covenant restricting further subdivision is encouraged; and
 - (d) 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.
- (7) Only one dwelling per parcel shall be permitted.
- (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 0.4 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 3.5.2 (8) are addressed.
- (10) 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 3.5.2 (8) are addressed.
- (11) Rezoning applications to permit new waterfront parcels, except 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.
- (12) Rezoning applications to permit new waterfront subdivisions that would typically contain a number of waterfront access points shall consider amalgamating water access points onto a single area, and the Provincial Subdivision Approving Officer is encouraged to consider options to amalgamate required water access points into a single area.

3.6 Civic Institutional (CI) Designation

The Civic Institutional 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.

3.6.1 Objective

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

3.6.2 Policies

- (1) Rural fire halls are acceptable in any designation, subject to zoning.
- (2) The Regional District will cooperate with the local school district 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.
- (2) The Regional 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 uses or property owners; and,
- (e) the proposed civic institutional use has the support of the Agricultural Land Commission if the land is within the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR).

3.7 Parks and Recreation (P) Designation

The economic and social 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 this designation may be used in the future to designate additional areas for parks and recreation purposes.

3.7.1 Objectives

- (1) To protect lands having significant recreational, cultural, archaeological and/or environmental value.
- (2) To improve outdoor recreational opportunities that enhance the liveability and tourism potential of the area.
- (3) To support and encourage the appropriate use of recreational amenities within the Regional District in order 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 provincial lands, in a manner that does not unnecessarily conflict with or restrict the resource capacity of those lands.

3.7.2 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) 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.
- (3) The Regional Board supports the preservation of existing, and identification of new public recreation sites and access points along area lakes and rivers.
- (4) Parks for passive recreation, playgrounds, protection of wildlife habitat or environmentally sensitive areas may be considered throughout the plan area in any designation.
- (5) The Parks and Recreation designation is intended to apply to select high value wildlife habitat and/or recreational areas.
- (6) The China Nose Trail, Houston Palisades Trail, Morice Mountain Nordic Ski Club trail network and the Houston Snowmobile Club trails are recognized as having high recreation values.

3.8 Resource (RE) Designation

The Resource 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 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.

3.8.1 Objectives

- (1) To preserve lands within the Plan area for forestry, agriculture and grazing, mineral or aggregate extraction, fish and wildlife management, trapping, wilderness oriented recreation and necessary institutional, public, utility or transportation services.
- (2) To support the Province in their role to ensure sound sustainable resource management within the Resource (RE) designation.

3.8.2 Policies

- (1) Only residential uses, and uses directly associated with agriculture and grazing, mineral or aggregate extraction, fish and wildlife management, wilderness oriented recreation, and necessary institutional, public, utility or transportation services use will be supported in the Resource (RE) 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 (RE) 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;
 - (c) or, provide increased demand for provision of Regional District service into a new or remote area.
- (4) Wherever possible established routes used by cattle or wildlife; recreation lands; 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 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, race tracks, 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.

SECTION 4 – GENERAL APPLICATION OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

4.1 Mineral and Aggregate Resources

A number of 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, industrial 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 within the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) is recognized as being subject to the *Agricultural Land Commission Act*.
- (4) The Regional District encourages the Ministry of Energy and Mines 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 Energy and Mines 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.

- (6) The Regional District encourages the Ministry of Energy and Mines 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.
- (7) The Regional District encourages the Province to consider not allowing work camps at new mines within a reasonable driving distance of a community in order to promote local residency.

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 the community and visitors, 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 protects and restores 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;
 - (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 a number of 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 community, 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.
- (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 Natural Resource Operations, 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 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 Subdivision 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 Environment are encouraged to closely monitor the August 1st to September 15th 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 the adequate accommodation of seasonal tourists, especially in conjunction with the August 1st to September 15th Sockeye fishery in Babine Lake.

4.3 Heritage Resources

Heritage resources are recognized by the Regional District as being important attributes of the Plan area. As such, the Regional District encourages the identification, protection, and conservation of archaeological, historical and paleontological sites throughout the Plan area.

4.3.1 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.

4.3.2 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 Board recognizes and supports the application and enforcement of the *Heritage Conservation Act* by the Provincial government. Specifically, Sections 12 and 14 of the Act requiring that archaeological sites not be altered or changed in any manner without a permit, is supported by the Regional District.

4.4 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 is 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.

4.4.1 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.

4.4.2 Policies

- (1) Urban scale development requiring community water and sewer services, except as appropriate for a 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 forestry, agriculture, mineral and aggregate extraction, recreation, fish and wildlife management) 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.

4.5 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.

4.5.1 Objectives

- (1) To ensure the establishment of a safe and efficient transportation network and to take into account traffic 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 Infrastructure of a safe, efficient and economic transportation system servicing both local and provincial needs.

4.5.2 Policies

- (1) The Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure shall be encouraged to consult with the Regional District and the community in the planning of new roads or upgrades within the Plan area in an effort to effectively manage impacts to existing and future land uses.
- (2) The Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure shall, wherever possible, be encouraged to direct future roads away from existing and potential agricultural lands, environmentally sensitive areas, and important viewscapes.
- (3) Off-street parking regulations in the zoning bylaw shall ensure a free-flow of traffic on public roads.
- (4) 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 Highway should be located, wherever possible, at single, well-spaced cross or four legged intersections; and

- e) parking should be provided on-site so as to avoid parking on the Highway right-of-way.

4.6 Environmental Hazards and Protection

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

4.6.1 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 reduces 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.

4.6.2 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, Lands and Natural Resource Operations and other Provincial agencies having 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 can not 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.

4.7 Fire Smart Development

Residential and other development in proximity to forested areas are at risk from wild fires. Wildfires are recognized and accepted as a significant hazard in the plan area given the importance of the community to maintain a close connection to the natural environment. This threat has increased due to the dead timber associated with the Pine beetle infestation and historic fire suppression practices. The OCP supports efforts to reduce the risk associated with wildfire.

4.7.1 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 reduces the risk of wildfire.
- (3) To reduce the wildfire hazard for existing development.

4.7.2 Policies

- (1) Property owners and developers are encouraged to implement development strategies that 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 principle building, and
 - d) locate buildings away from the top of sloped lands.
- (2) Applicants for rezoning to allow subdivision shall be required to consider “fire proofing” and “fire smart” principles in their subdivision design. For example new development 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 “fire proofing” and “fire smart” standards for subdivisions.

4.8 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.

4.8.1 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.

4.8.2 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 business 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 in order to protect rural residential areas from impacts associated with noise and traffic, and to help protect the integrity of existing commercial and industrial areas.

4.9 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 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 has agreed to develop strategies and take actions to achieve the following goals.

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

In 2007 the Province established the following goals.

- By 2020, B.C. will reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 33 per cent, compared to 2007 levels.
- By 2050, GHG emissions in the Province will be reduced by at least 80 per cent below 2007 levels.
- By 2010, the B.C. public sector will be carbon neutral.

Section 877(3) of the *Local Government Act* states that Official Community Plans adopted after May 31, 2010 must include targets for the reduction of greenhouse gas (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. 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 877 (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.

4.9.1 OCP Visionary Targets and Action

For the purpose of complying with Section 877 (3) of the *Local Government Act* and meeting the commitments under the CAC the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako accepts the following provincial GHG reduction targets as the Regional District's visionary target.

- By 2020, B.C. will reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 33 per cent, compared to 2007 levels.
- By 2050, GHG emissions in the Province will be reduced by at least 80 per cent below 2007 levels.

The Plan seeks to reduce GHG emissions in a manner that promotes and secures the regions 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 manner in which 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 4.9.2 and 4.9.3 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 technology 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.

4.9.2 Objectives

- (1) The Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako will work towards reducing Electoral Area G community greenhouse gas emissions by encouraging, facilitating, and supporting development and land use patterns that are more energy efficient, result in more self sustaining communities, and 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.

4.9.3 Policies

- (1) Incentives offered by utilities and senior government to reduce residential energy use will be promoted.
- (2) The use of building permit rebates where certain sustainable development practices are used shall be considered.
- (3) Residents and local businesses shall be encouraged to investigate and adopt new technologies and best practices to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- (4) The use of sustainability checklists shall be considered for use as part of building permit, rezoning, development variance permit, and temporary use permit applications in order to raise awareness of options to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and reduce the impact of development on the environment.
- (5) Renewable energy generation such as biomass, geothermal heating, solar power, and wind turbines are encouraged.
- (6) The objectives identified in Section 4.9.2 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 significant commercial uses to establish within the District of Houston, the Village of Granisle and the community of Topley.
- (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 3.2.2(4), Policy 3.4.2(2), Policy 3.5.2(2) and Policy 4.8.2(1).
- (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 areas of existing concentrations of population.
- (f) Within the Rural Resource Designation, Policy 3.8.2(2) allows only a limited amount of low density residential use.
- (g) Within the Rural Resource Designation, Policy 3.8.2(6) supports the development of wind farms intended to generate power for sale.
- (h) Policies 3.4.2(6), 3.5.2(6), 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 4.4.2(1) directs urban scale development requiring community water and sewer services into municipalities where such services can be provided as an extension to existing systems.

SECTION 5 – ASSOCIATED MAPS

5.1 Interpretation of 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 H1, H2, Ag1, and RR1 zones, or new zones with similar uses, may be considered.

Commercial (C): In areas so designated, any of the Commercial Zones in the zoning bylaw may be considered.

Industrial (I): In areas so designated, any of the Industrial Zones in the zoning bylaw may be considered.

Rural Residential (RR): In areas so designated, the Residential Zones, and the H1, and H2 zones, or new zones with similar uses, may be considered.

Lakeshore (L): In areas so designated, the R4, H1, and H2 zones, or new zones with similar uses, may be considered.

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

Parks and Recreation (P): In areas so designated, the RR1, P1, and P2, zones, or new zones with similar uses, may be considered.

Resource (RE): In areas so designated, the RR1, H2, Ag1, P2 and P3 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 LRMP and the Bulkley LRMP processes. The Plan area also includes the Kispiox LRMP and the West Babine 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. The Morice Mountain Nordic Ski Trails take up 3,000 hectares of the Houston 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 recreation values, 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 Nose (Morice LRMP): China Nose is a prominent feature characterized by a rugged north-facing cliff. 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 recreation values 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 1100 of the BC mountain goat population live in the Morice LRMP area. In British Columbia mountain goat is yellow listed, which usually means that the species' welfare is not of immediate conservation concern. However the mountain goat is classed as S4, which means that it is considered to be of long term conservation concern. The Morice LRMP endeavors 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): The caribou population within the plan area are considered a "blue listed species," which means that there is a conservation concern but that the population is not under immediate threat. Federally, the caribou are considered to be threatened and have a recovery strategy developed under the *Species at Risk Act*. In 2004 the Telkwa herd consisted of about 75 animals and appeared to be increasing. 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.

Recreation Trails (Morice 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.

Sensitive Ecosystem 50 m 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.

SECTION 6 – IMPLEMENTATION

Following the formal adoption of this Plan a number of 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 considering 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 921 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 proposed temporary use will not have adverse affects on neighbouring land uses or property owners;
 - (d) The proposed temporary use does not require a significant amount of capital investment in a particular location; and,
 - (e) The proposed temporary use has the support of the Agricultural Land Commission if the land is within the Agricultural Land Reserve (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 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 Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) are subject to the *Agricultural Land Commission Act*, its orders and regulations.
- (2) Proposals for non-farm use, subdivision, exclusion or inclusion of lands within the Agricultural Land Reserve (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.
- (3) Proposals for non-farm use, subdivision, exclusion or inclusion of lands within the ALR that are approved by the Agricultural Land Commission remain subject to the policies and regulations of the Regional District.

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.

6.6 Water and Sewer Approvals

- (1) The Provincial government regulates water and sewer systems through such legislation as the *Drinking Water Protection Act*, the *Health Act* and the *Waste Management Act* and 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.

6.8 Parkland Dedication

- (1) Where a proposed subdivision triggers a requirement to provide up to 5% 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.