



# BMLAP Implementation

2024 Bell McKinnon Local Area Plan (BMLAP) Implementation  
Update

Municipality of North Cowichan  
October 4, 2024

[The link to the interactive presentation is found here: <https://www.northcowichan.ca/BMLAP>]

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## BMLAP Overview

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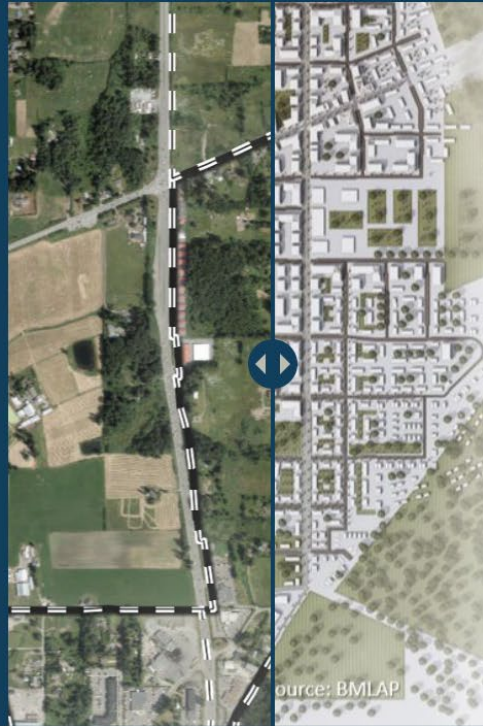


The award winning Bell McKinnon Local Area Plan (BMLAP) was adopted in 2018. The BMLAP envisions an urban, walkable, mixed-use community and the sets expectation that the infrastructure and community amenities will be paid for by development. The new community is expected to accommodate more than 6,000 residential units plus significant commercial development (in the area of the plan south of Herd Road).

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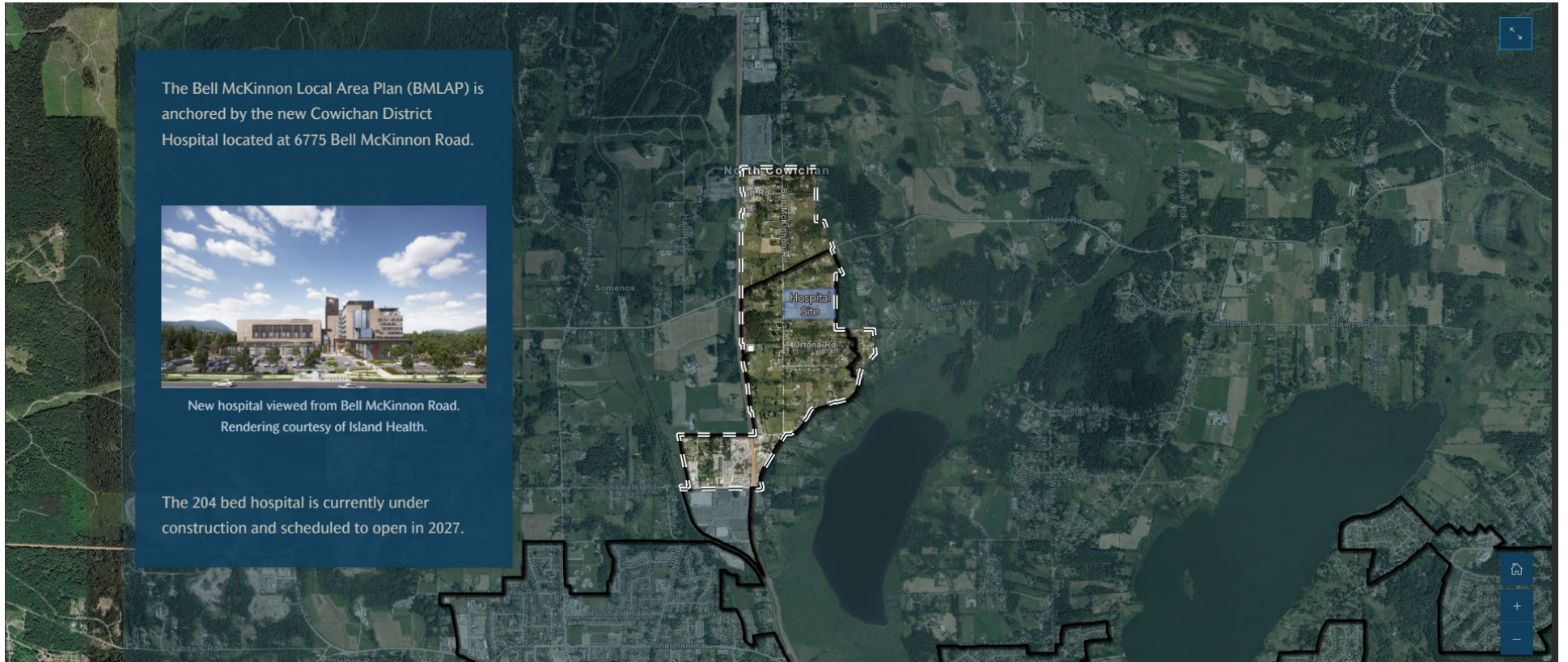


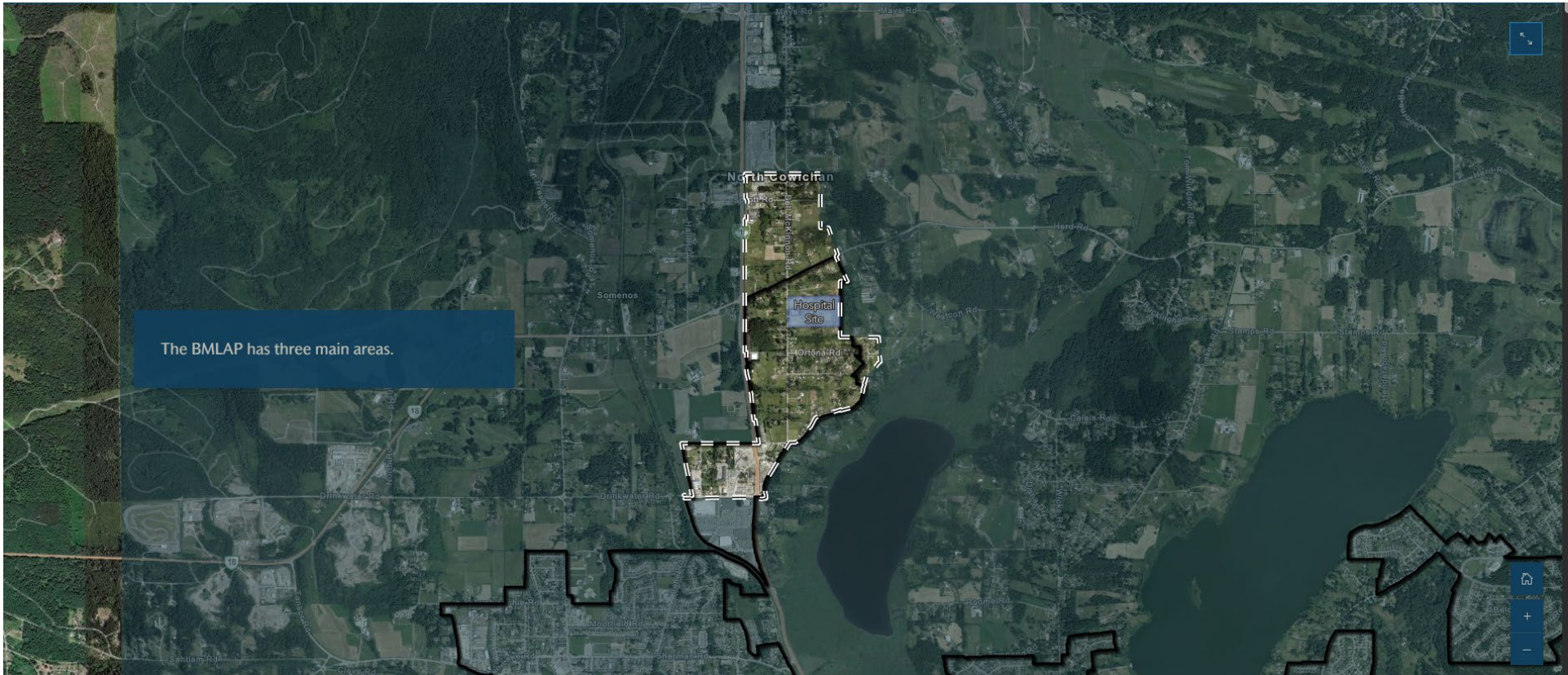
The Bell McKinnon Local Area Plan (BMLAP) is anchored by the new Cowichan District Hospital located at 6775 Bell McKinnon Road.



New hospital viewed from Bell McKinnon Road.  
Rendering courtesy of Island Health.

The 204 bed hospital is currently under construction and scheduled to open in 2027.



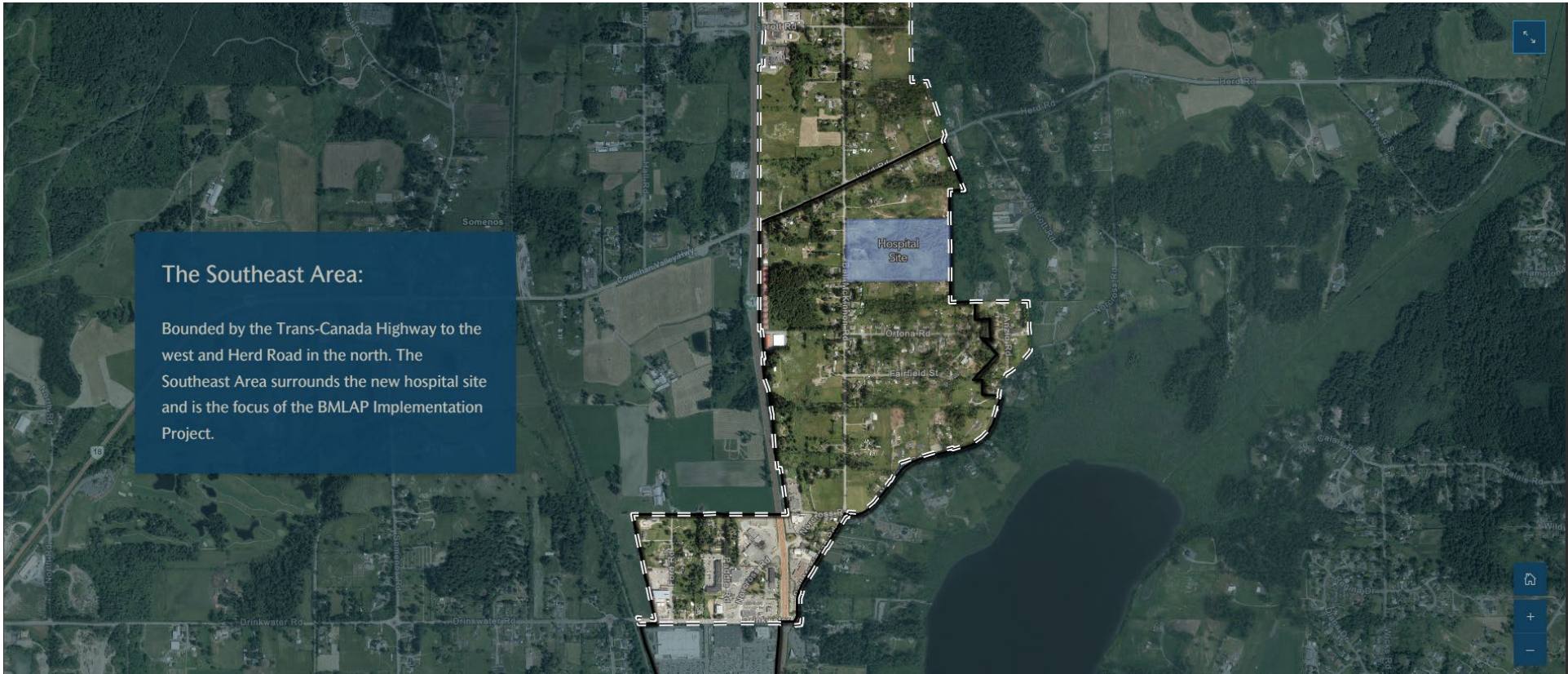




The area west of the Trans-Canada Highway:

Where significant development is already underway and complete.

Several residential and institutional buildings have been completed. Zoning is in place for at least 300 additional residential units and the Municipality has acquired a central park.









## Implementation and Next Steps



The Municipality of North Cowichan is working on implementing the BMLAP based on three goals:

- 1 Implement Official Community Plan Direction
- 2 Realize the Vision of the BMLAP
- 3 Streamline Development Approvals

This presentation walks through three key challenges related to implementing the BMLAP:

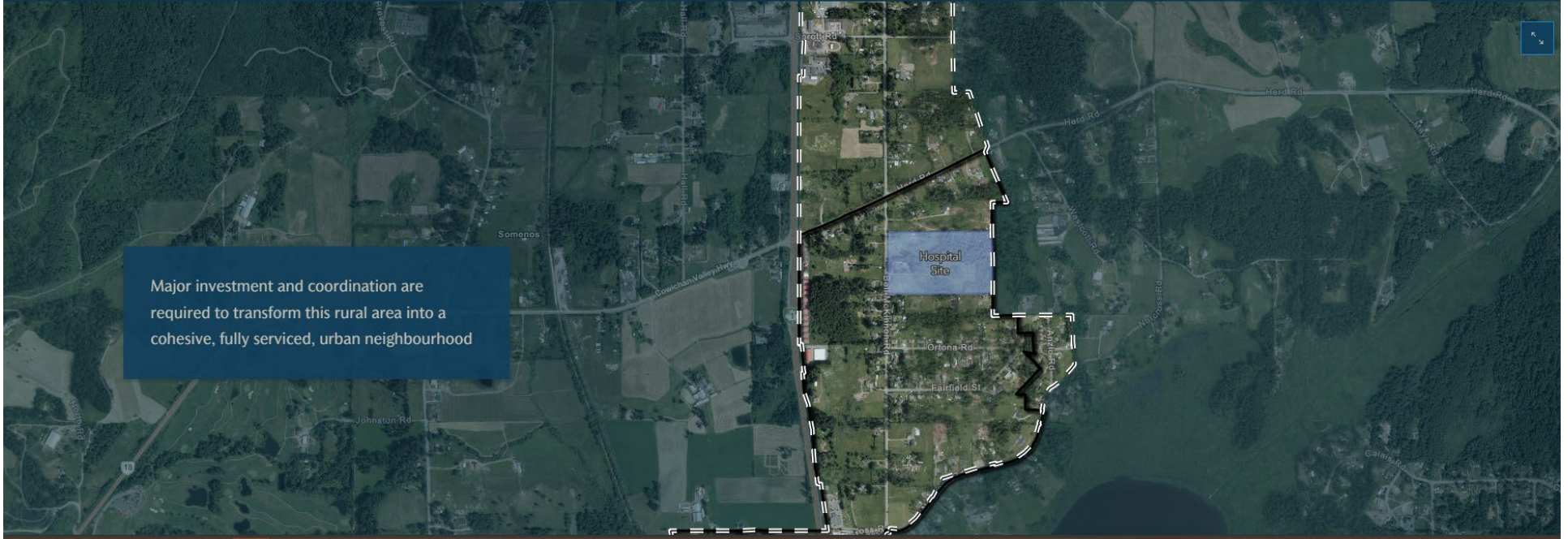
1. The need to secure land for public uses
2. The need to refine the proposed Blue-Green Network and
3. The need to provide infrastructure.

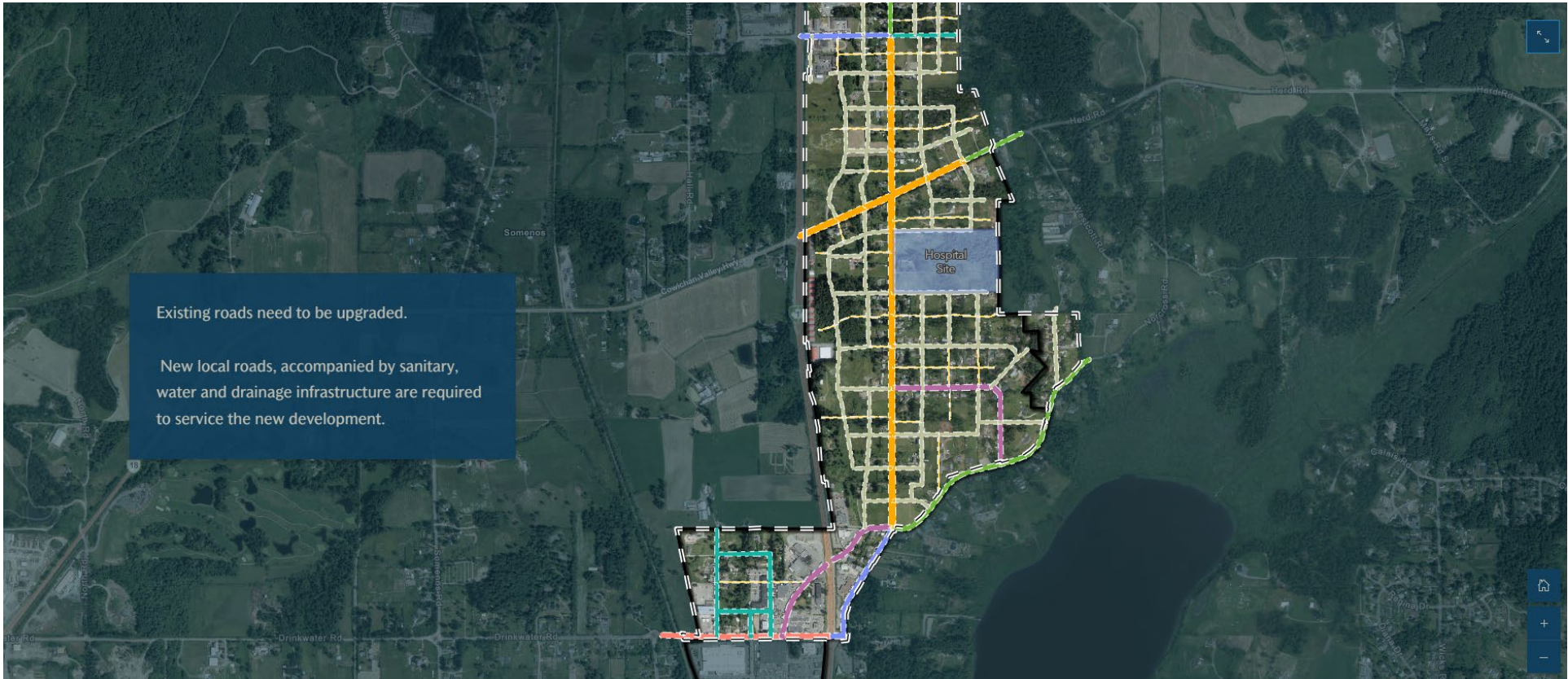
The Municipality of North Cowichan will have to provide leadership and direction to the development community: securing public lands, establishing the Blue-Green Network and developing new infrastructure will not happen organically.

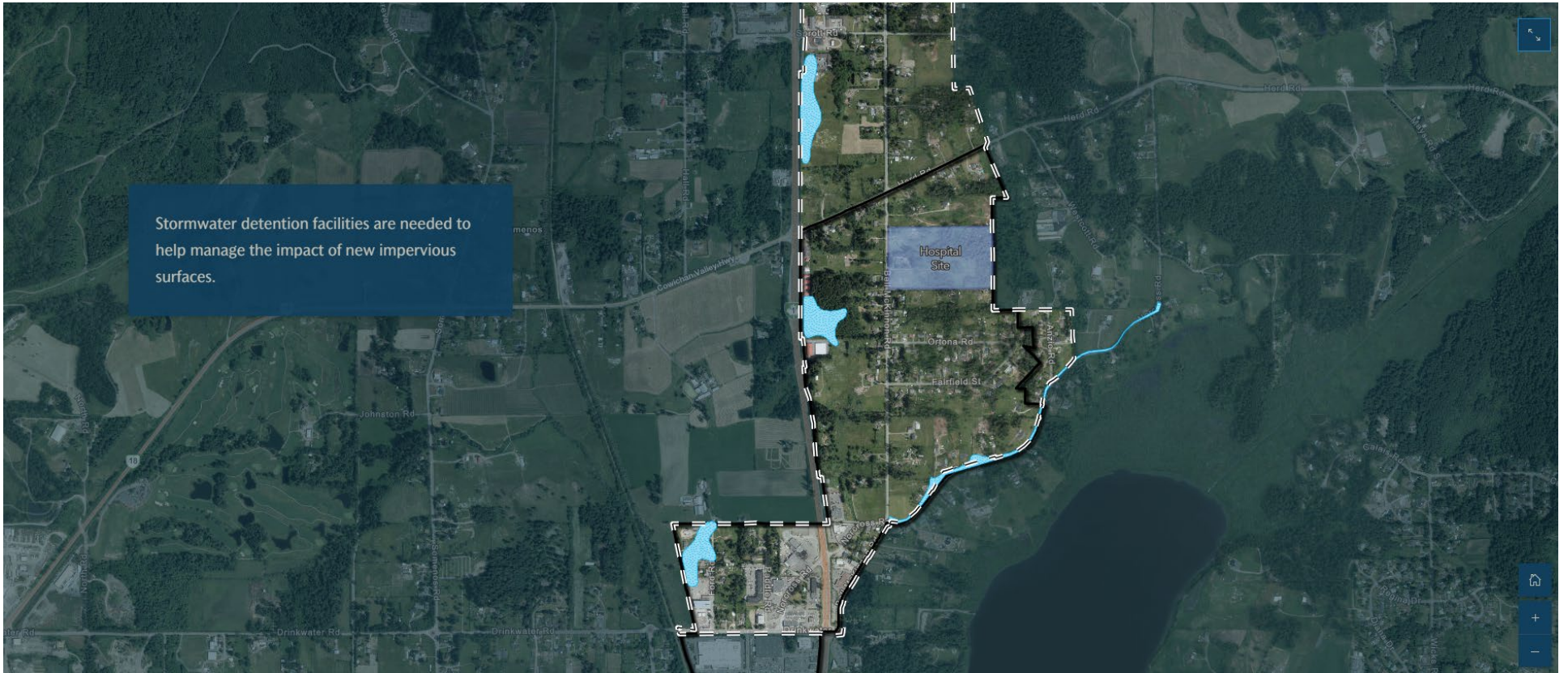
This presentation accompanies a staff report which includes three draft Council Policies and requests direction to update the BMLAP and amend the zoning for the area. As a package, these actions and policies represent progress towards addressing these three challenges.

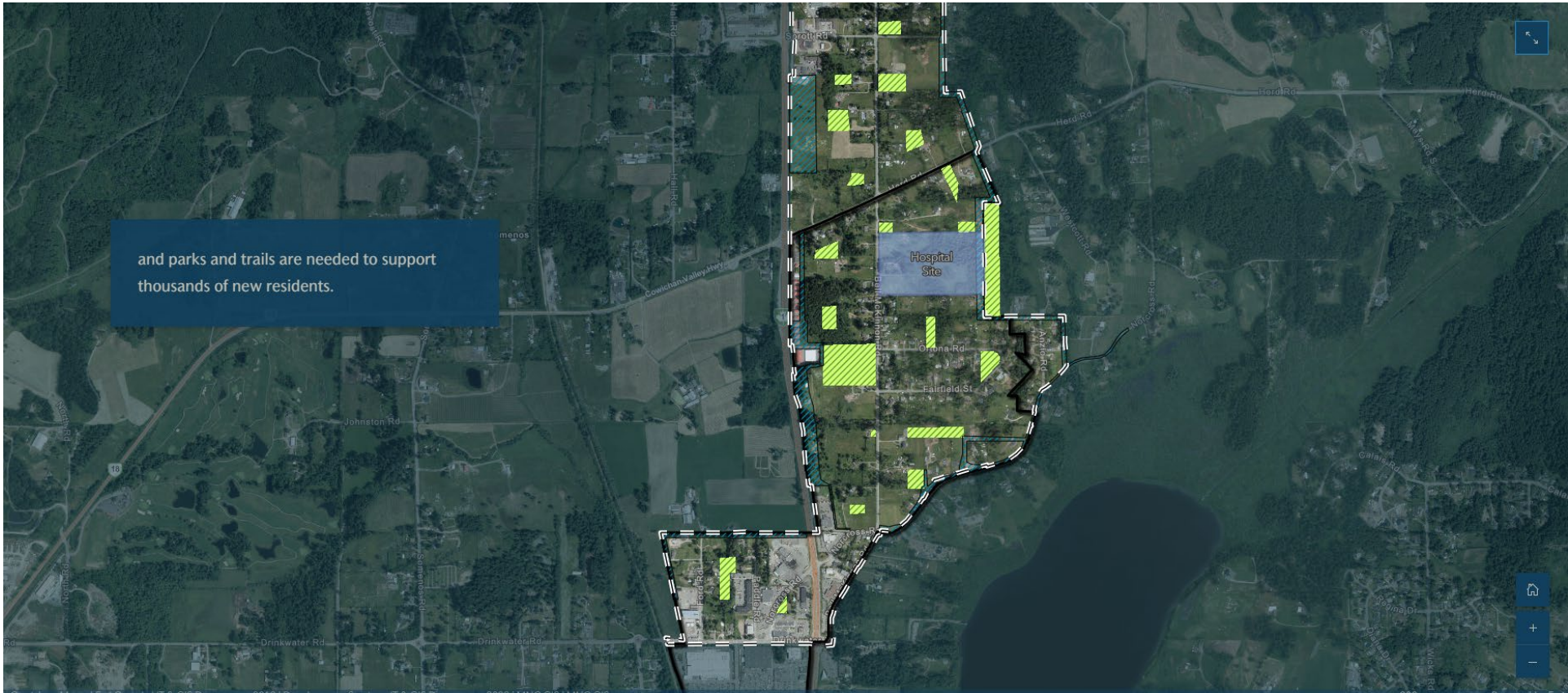


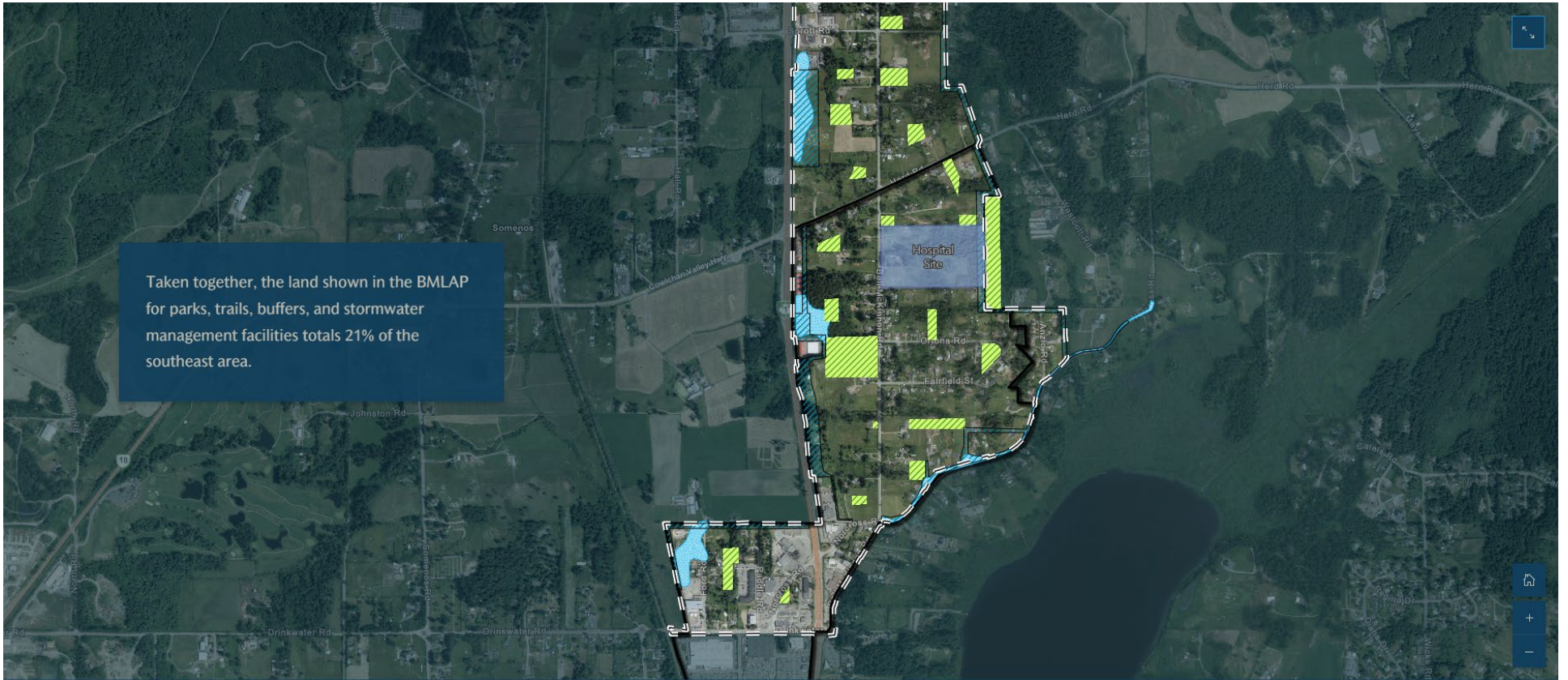
## Land for Public Uses

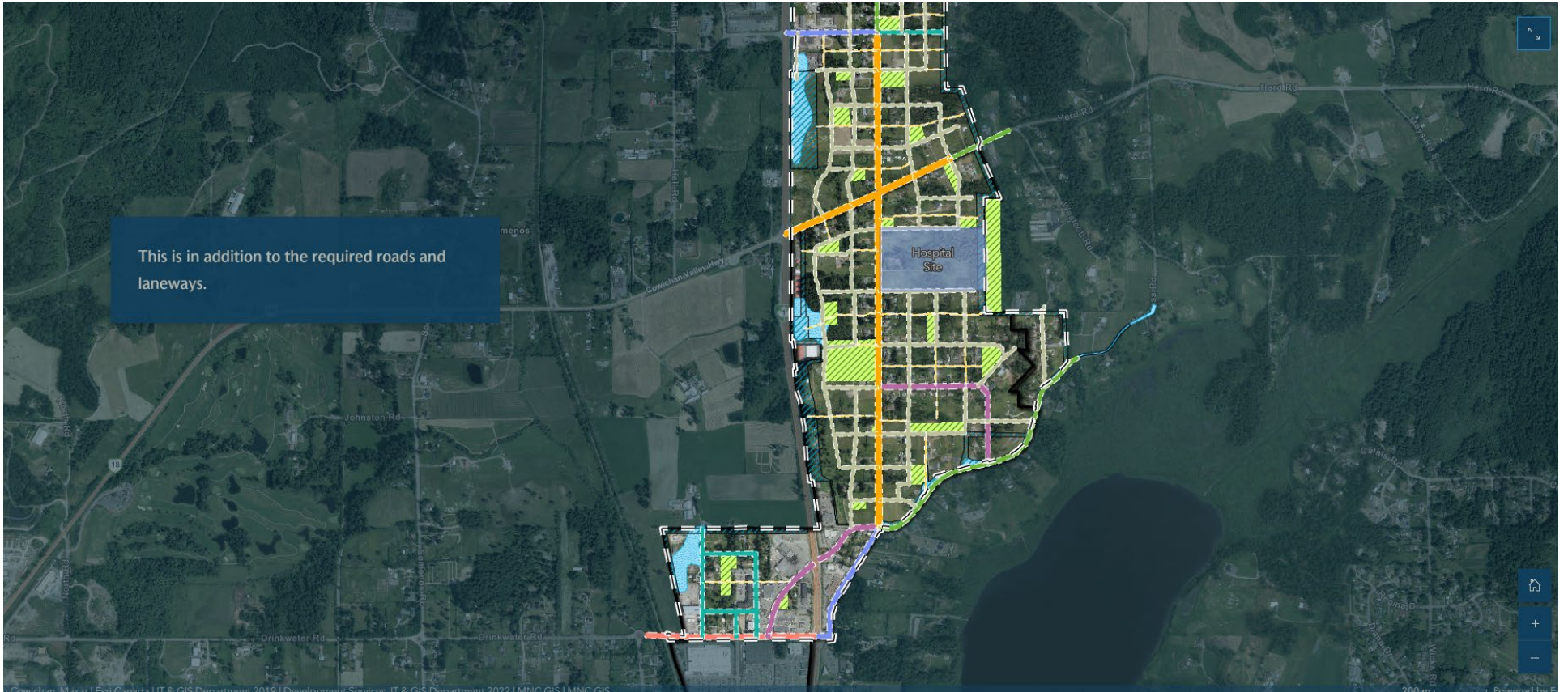










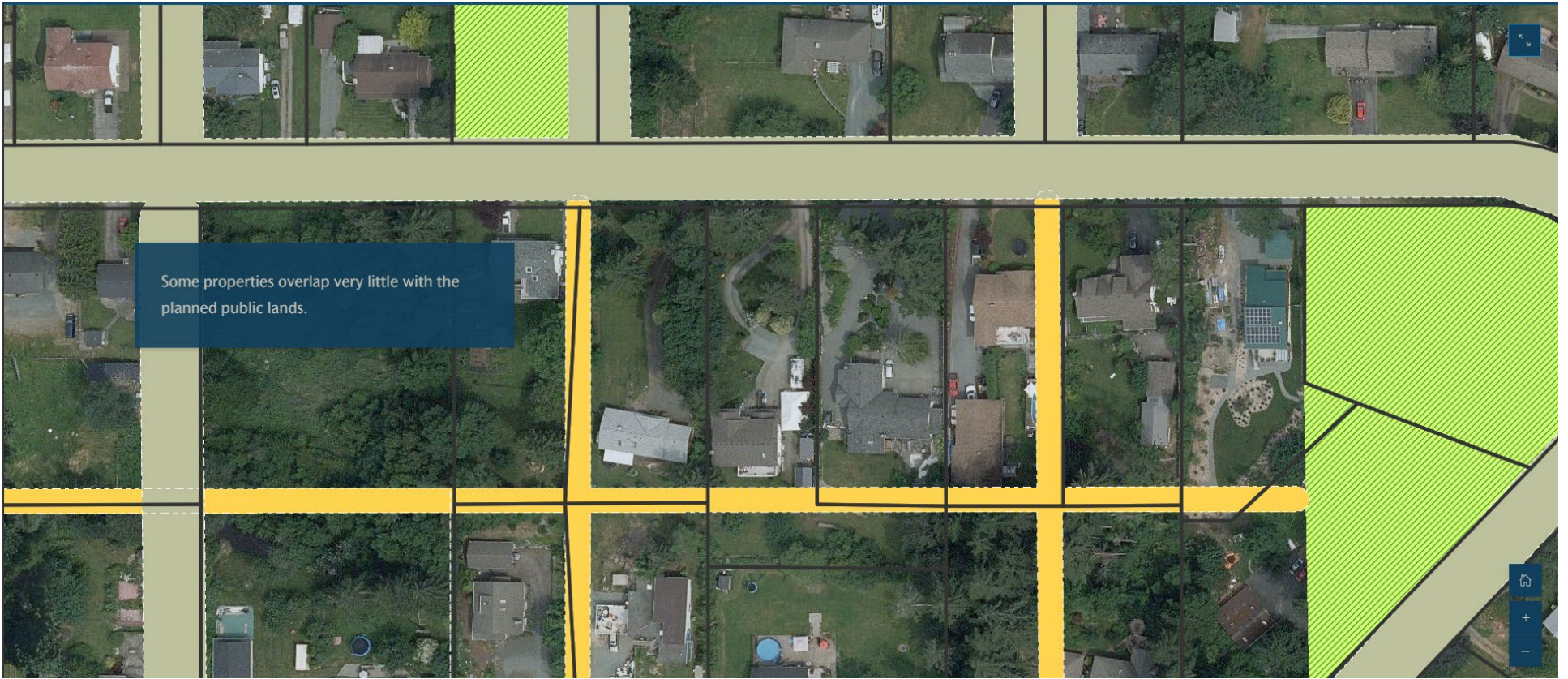






Unlike in a master planned community where the entire area is under single ownership, the existing property boundaries add complications.

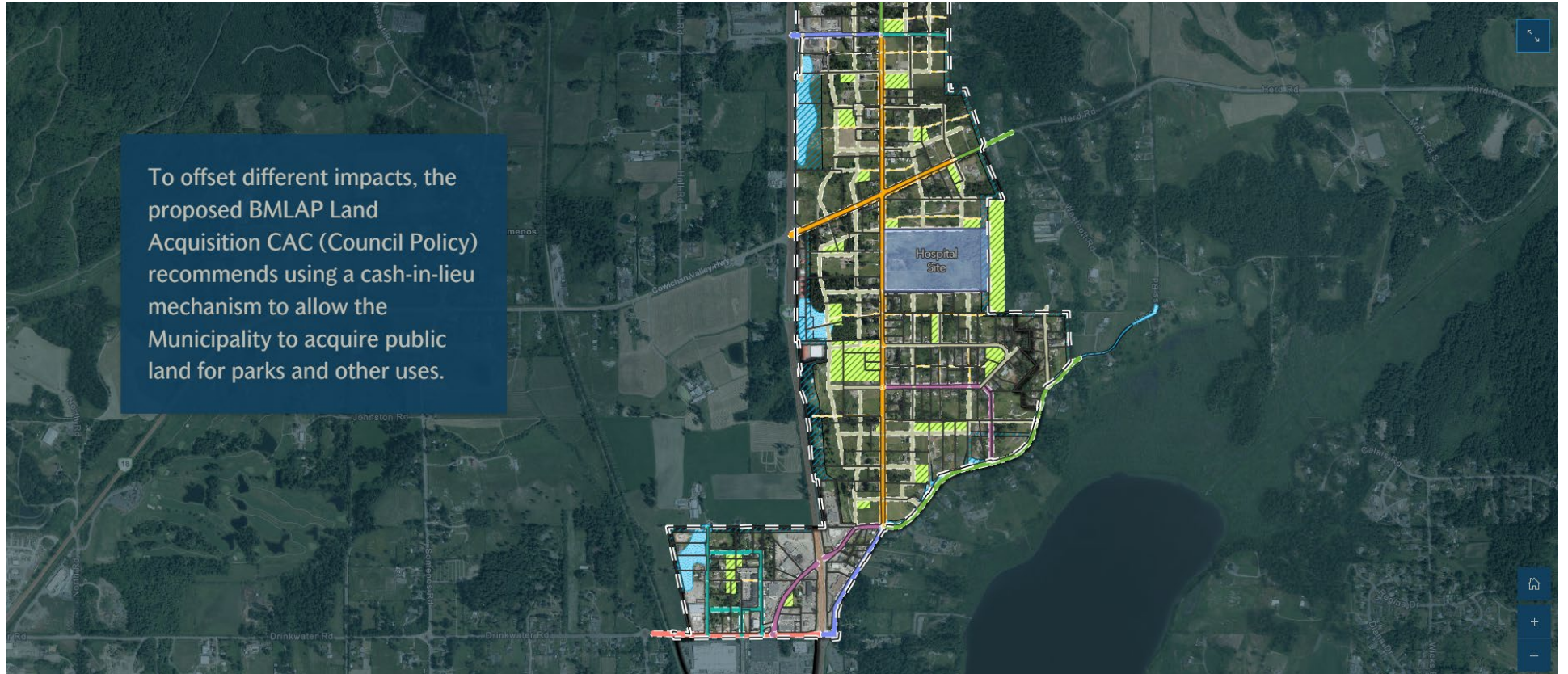
It is not possible to distribute the public land equally across all properties and still create a functional community.





While other properties fully overlap with the planned public lands - a park in this example.

To offset different impacts, the proposed BMLAP Land Acquisition CAC (Council Policy) recommends using a cash-in-lieu mechanism to allow the Municipality to acquire public land for parks and other uses.





## **Proposed BMLAP Land Acquisition Community Amenity Contribution**

(Council Policy for Consideration)

- At the time of rezoning, a cash-in-lieu contribution will be requested to help fund public land acquisitions.
- The amount will be based on a calculation of the average amount of land required for public uses for the southeast area, taking into account any public lands being dedicated as part of the development.
- This cash can then be used to finance public land purchases on other properties, as shown in the BMLAP.



## **Blue-Green Network**



One of the important features of the BMLAP is the Blue-Green Network.

Made up of parks, trails, buffers, and naturalized drainage and stormwater detention facilities, the Blue-Green Network promises a community that is

"Green, Not Grey: A neighbourhood built on a green network that supports a healthy community and ecosystem."



Although the elements of the Blue-Green Network are present in the plan, there are gaps in connectivity.

This is why the 2022 OCP suggests that we

"Update the Blue-Green Network Mapping in the BMLAP to better align with the Municipality's commitment to identify and acquire open space in this area to improve connectivity of wildlife habitat corridors"



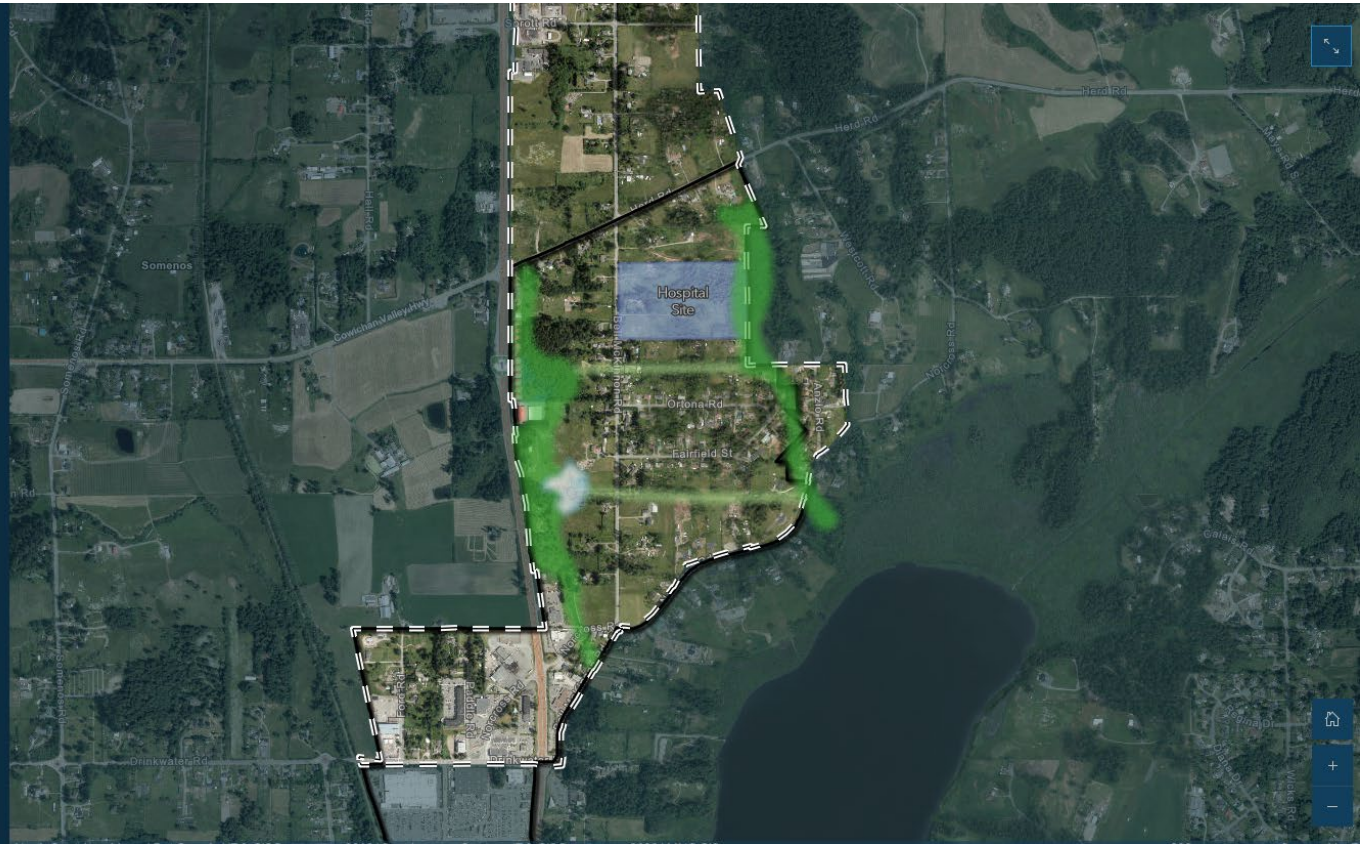
Preliminary recommendations from an ecological study suggest developing a network of regional and urban corridors.

Urban corridors can be 10-30m wide while regional corridors should be at least 30m wide.

Wildlife corridors should be as contiguous as possible, but can still be effective even when interrupted to accommodate roads etc.

Updating the BMLAP to add wildlife corridors also presents an opportunity to:

- Refine and confirm the preferred park locations and
- Address conflicts between the Blue-Green Network and the transportation network





The BMLAP identifies a series of many small parks.

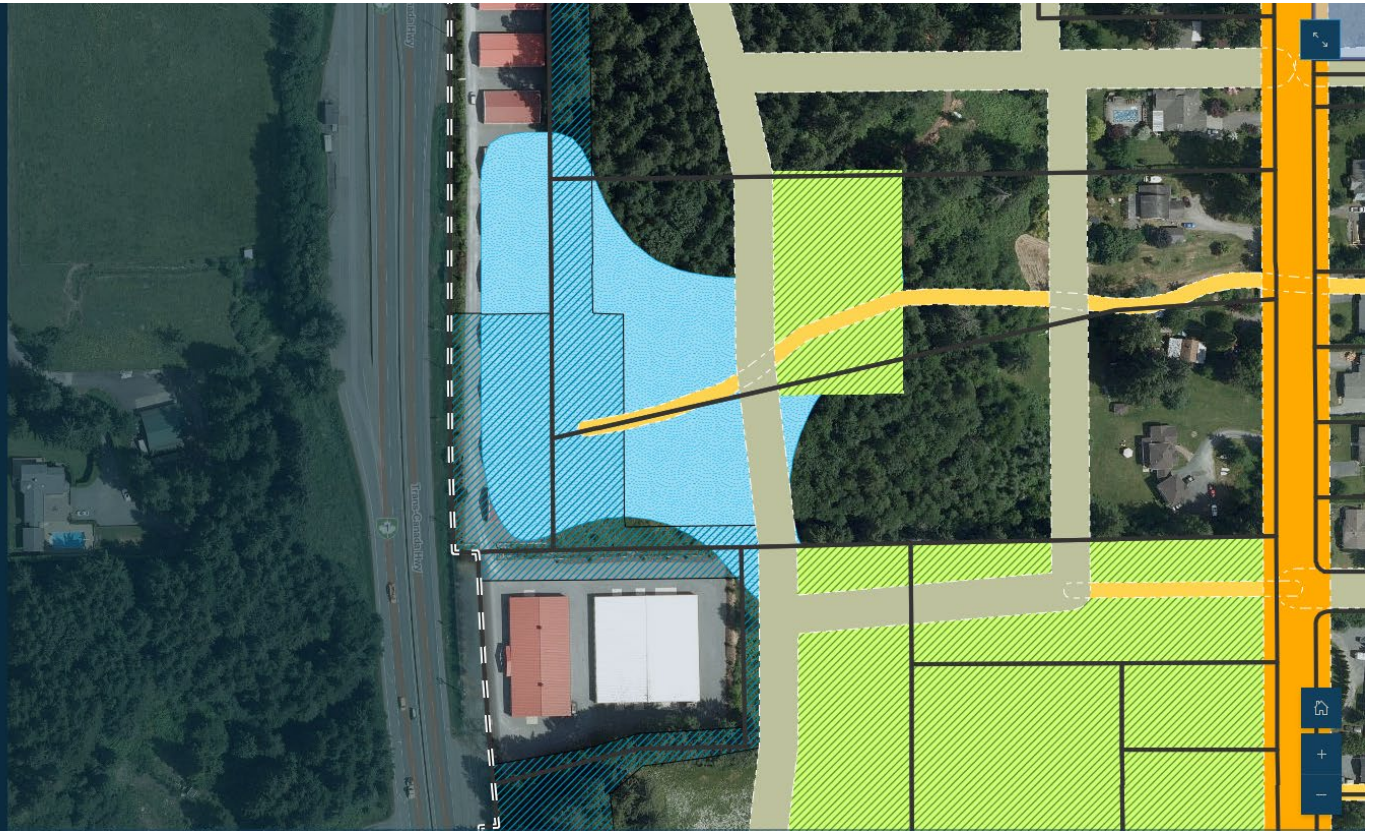
However, having multiple small parks in a 1.2 square kilometer area may not be practical from an operational perspective and may not be the optimal way to meet the recreational needs of this future community (note that a community needs assessment is proposed to be completed in parallel with the LAP update).

Also, because the current park locations identified in the BMLAP are "conceptual" it can be difficult to communicate expectations with property owners, especially those whose properties are entirely shown as park.



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There are also places where the BMLAP shows the Blue-Green Network overlapping with the transportation network in ways that don't make sense. Here a local road and laneway are shown intersecting a regional level stormwater detention facility. These types of conflicts can be addressed through the LAP update.



## Infrastructure Needs

A new sanitary sewer main and upgraded water main being installed along Bell McKinnon Road as part of the hospital project. This new infrastructure creates a spine of servicing and will allow for incremental development to radiate outward from Bell McKinnon Road.

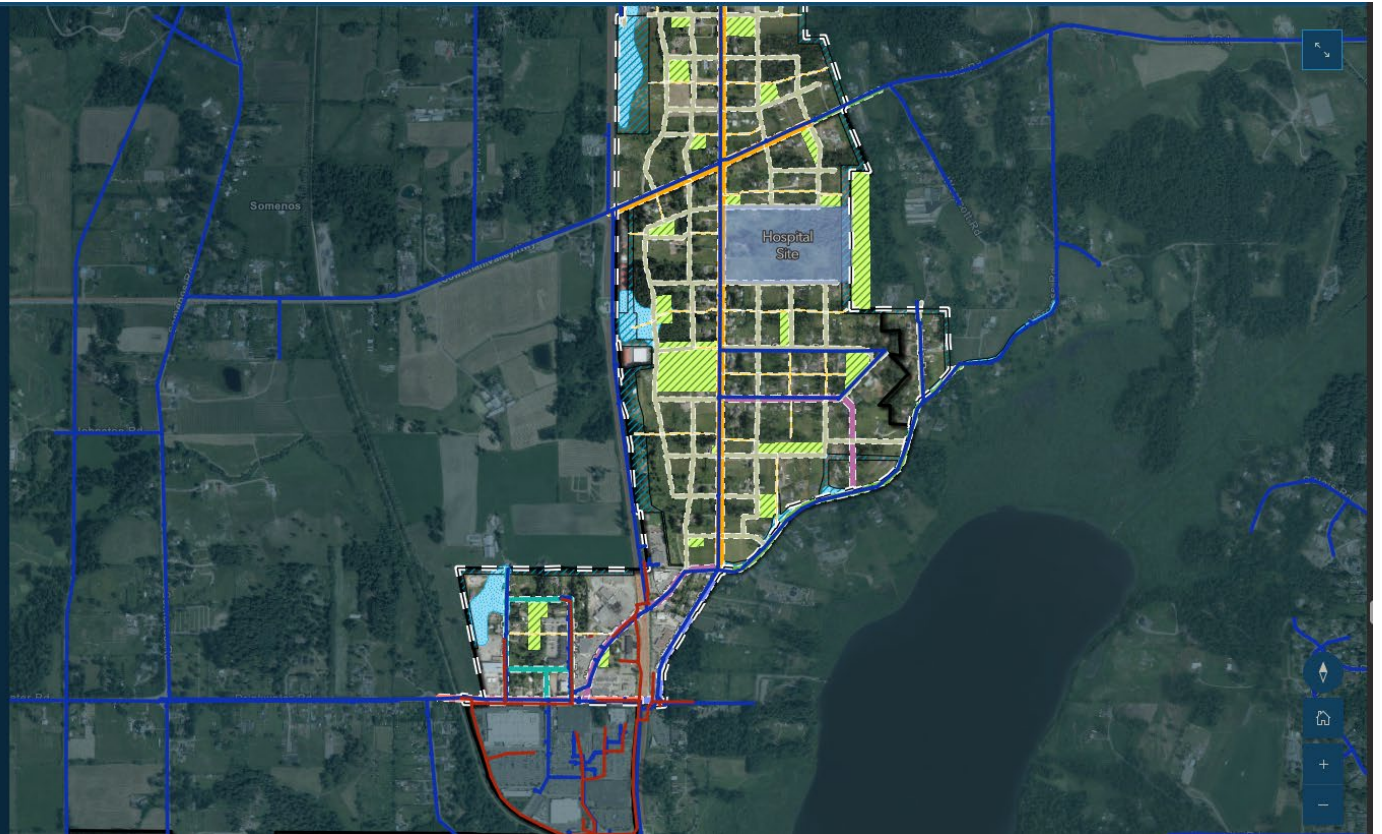


### Servicing Required for CDHRP (Approximate Locations)

- Water
- Storm Drainage Routes
- Sanitary Sewer
- Boundary of Sanitary Sewer Gravity Catchment
- New Road
- Road upgrade area

Most of the other new infrastructure inside the BMLAP will be constructed by developers at the time of building as "frontage improvements".

The spine of infrastructure along Bell McKinnon Road and the incremental servicing within the BMLAP by developers forms the basis for the proposed Phasing Plan (Council Policy).



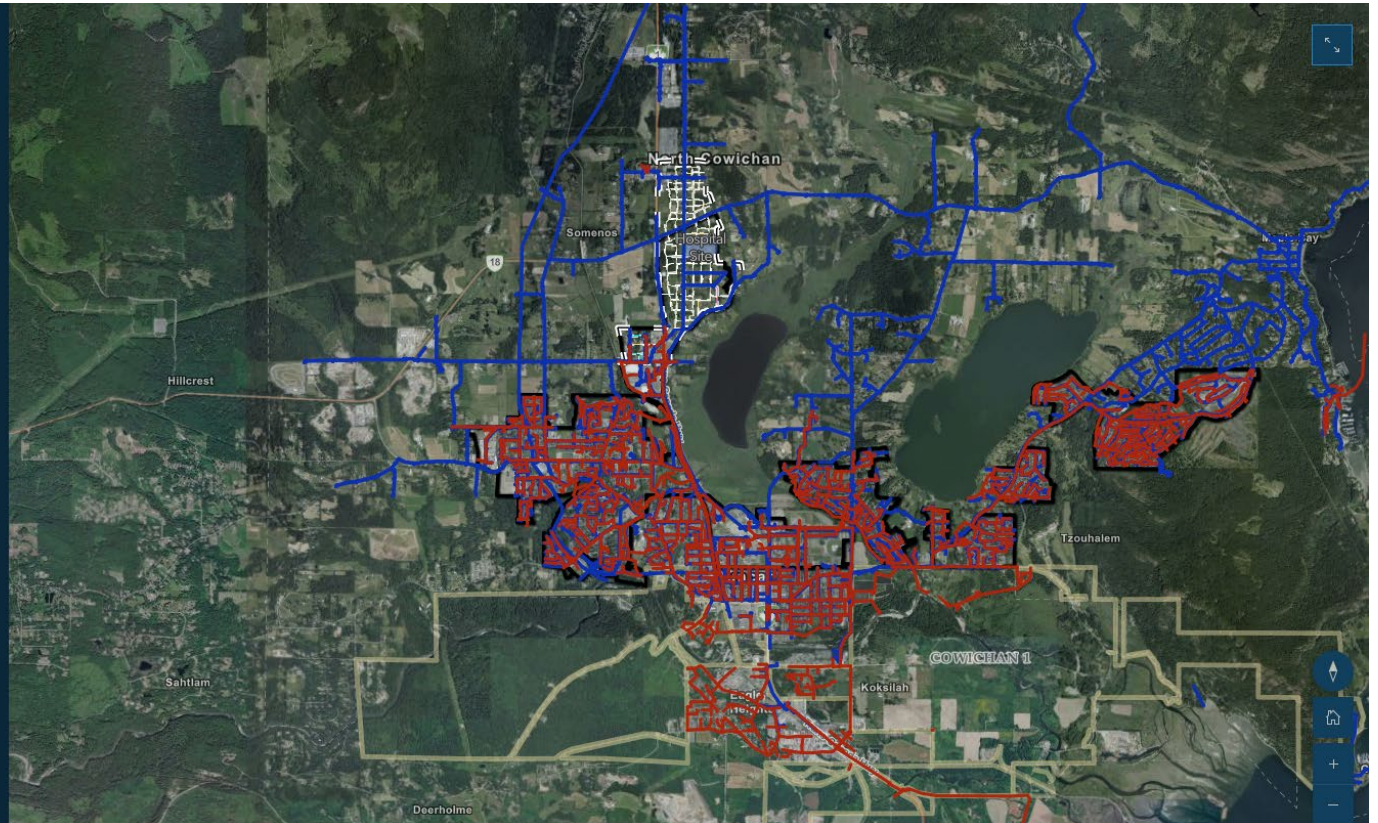
Growth within the Bell McKinnon neighbourhood will also trigger infrastructure upgrades outside of the BMLAP.

The Bell McKinnon neighbourhood connects into the same water and sewer systems that service the entire South End of North Cowichan.

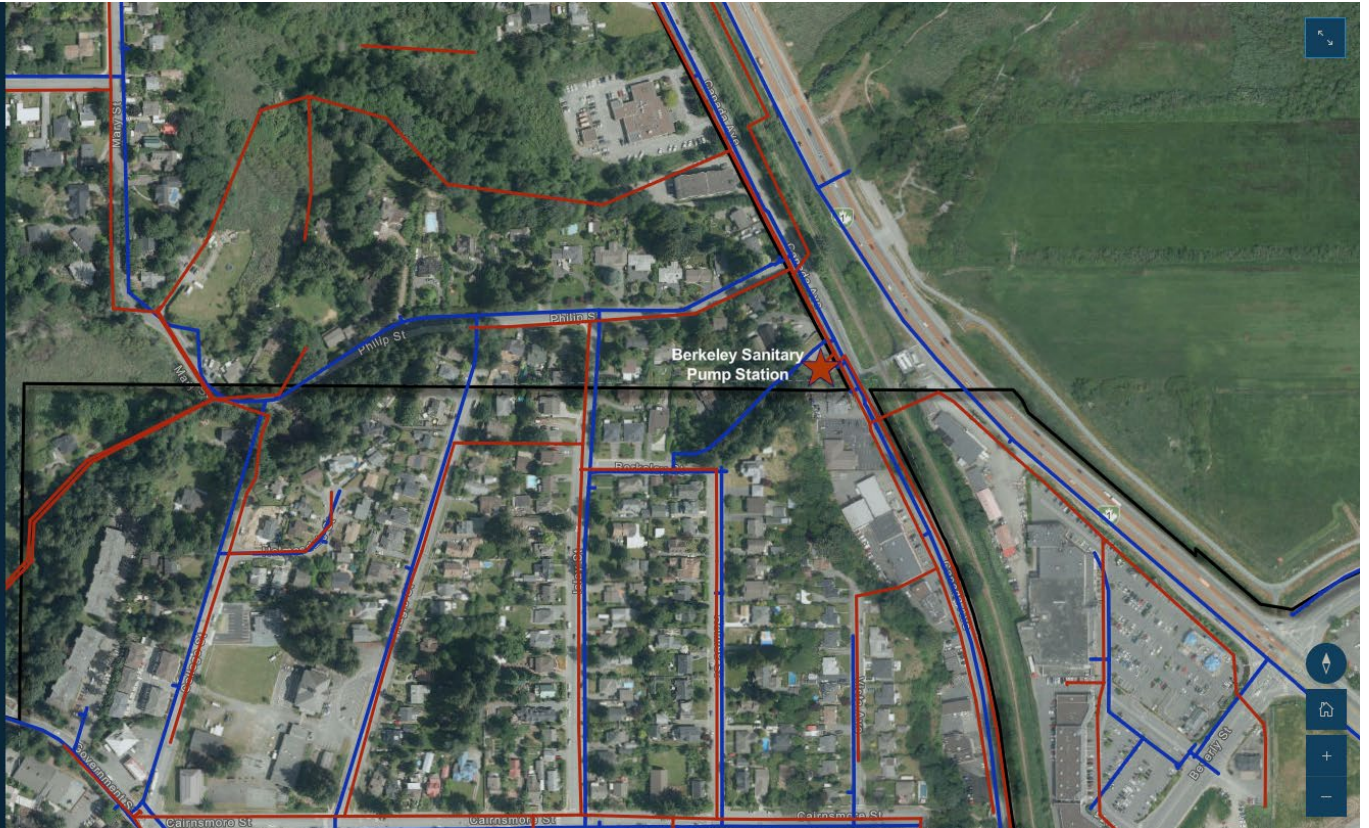
The Berkey's Corner neighbourhood is also connected to these same systems and is experiencing high rates of growth.

Addressing servicing constraints in the South End is a necessary precondition of realizing development in the Bell McKinnon area.

Key infrastructure upgrades include:



1) Upgrades to the Berkeley Sanitary Pump Station  
(approximate cost: \$2 Million, Class D estimate  
with 40% contingency)



2) A new Water Reservoir (approximate cost: \$16 Million, Class D estimate with 40% contingency)

\*Note that the location shown is conceptual. Several locations are being considered for the new reservoir.



3) Upgrades to the JUB Wastewater Treatment Plant (approximate cost: \$4 Million, Class D estimate with 40% contingency)



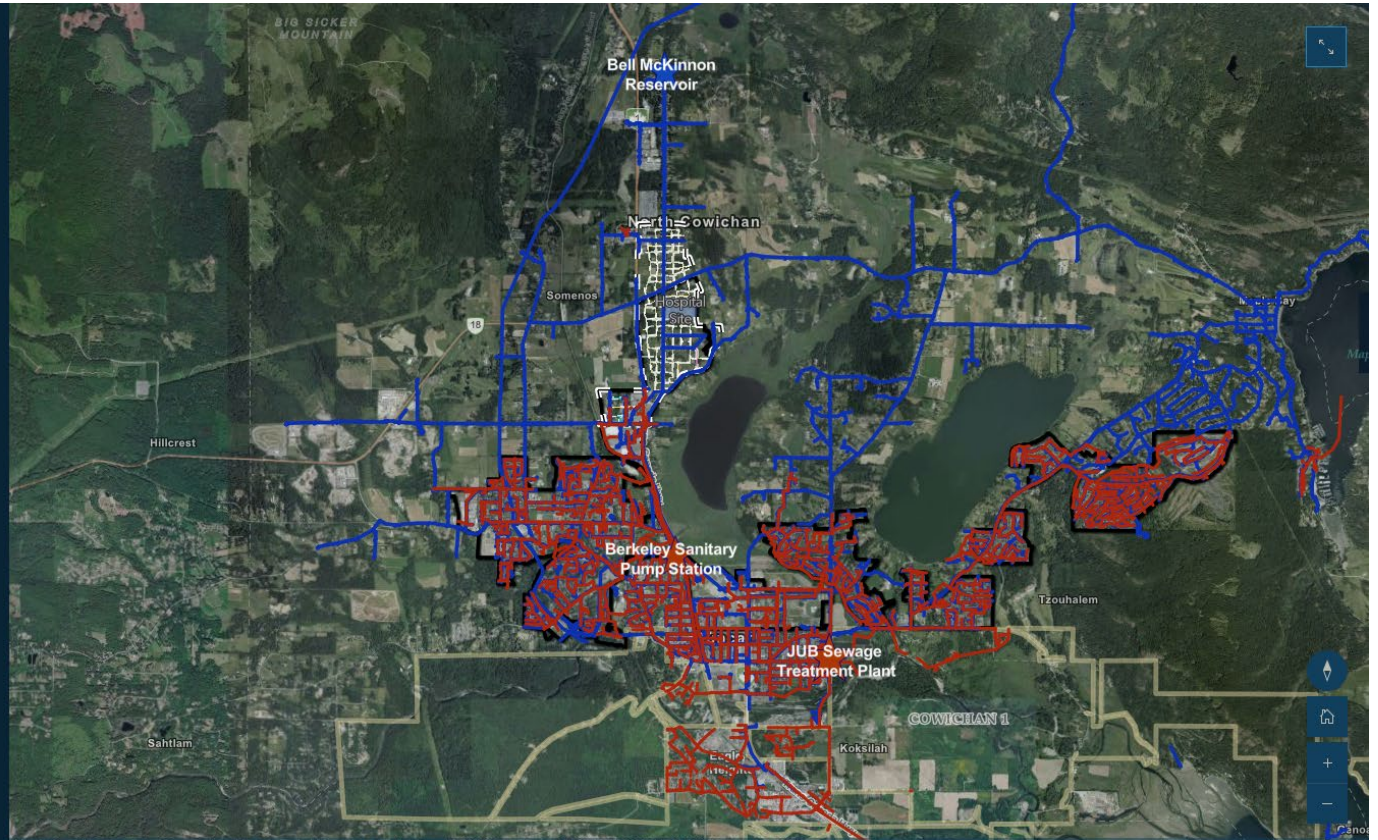


These and several smaller projects are needed in the near or immediate term.

Other large projects will be needed to accommodate the long-term build out of the BMLAP and the other growth areas in the South End.

The expectation is that development will pay for these infrastructure upgrades.

The proposed Interim Community Amenity Contribution Policy recommends a mechanism for collecting money to help pay for these projects in the immediate term.





## Proposed BMLAP Phasing Plan

(Council Policy for Consideration)

- Developed per OCP Direction to avoid "piecemeal or scattered growth" in favour of growth that occurs in a "logical, incremental manner respectful of the social, economic, environmental, and climate objectives of the District"
- Based on the three main plan areas, the Phasing Plan further splits the southeast area (around the new hospital) into 2 phases (Phase 2 and Phase 3)
- **Phase 1:** the area west of the highway is under development
- **Phase 2:** properties in the southeast area with frontage on Bell McKinnon Road. This phase is open for rezoning applications and development, building from the spine of infrastructure being installed along Bell McKinnon Road.
- **Phase 3:** properties in the southeast area that are not adjacent to Bell McKinnon Road. Rezoning is generally discouraged until Phase 2 is largely built-out. The Phasing Plan includes criteria to allow Phase 3 properties to proceed sooner, where it makes sense.
- **The Future Growth Phase:** properties north of Herd Road. This area is reserved for future development, rezoning cannot occur without an OCP amendment to move the Urban Containment Boundary.





## **Proposed Interim Community Amenity Contribution Policy**

(Council Policy for Consideration)

- Development Cost Charges (DCCs) create a framework for funding and constructing growth-related infrastructure projects.
- However, a short-term funding gap exists until the DCC Bylaw is updated and the new rates comes into force.
- The proposed Interim CAC Policy is designed to address the funding gap and request (at the time of rezoning) that new developments contribute their fair share toward growth-related infrastructure.
- The proposed CAC also includes a relatively modest contribution towards the Affordable Housing Reserve Fund.



## Conclusion



Taken together, these policies and actions represent substantial progress towards the three goals of the BMLAP Implementation project. However, significant additional work is needed. On an ongoing basis, successful implementation of the BMLAP will require:

- Adhering to the phasing and implementation plans
- Taking a long-term view in zoning decisions and CAC negotiations
- Resisting short-term pressure from landowners to make decisions that are not optimal for achieving full build out in the long-term
- Negotiating land acquisitions where needed
- Ensuring development approval processes are efficient, clear and equitable