



Renewing Rural Economies

Exploring the Connection Between Land Use Planning and Regenerative Economic Development in the Cowichan Valley, British Columbia



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Welcome & Introductions





MODUS Planning, Design & Engagement, Inc.

Vision: Co-create deep green, just and healthy communities

Mission: We convene rigorous, experiential processes and deliver transformative projects to address complex, collective challenges

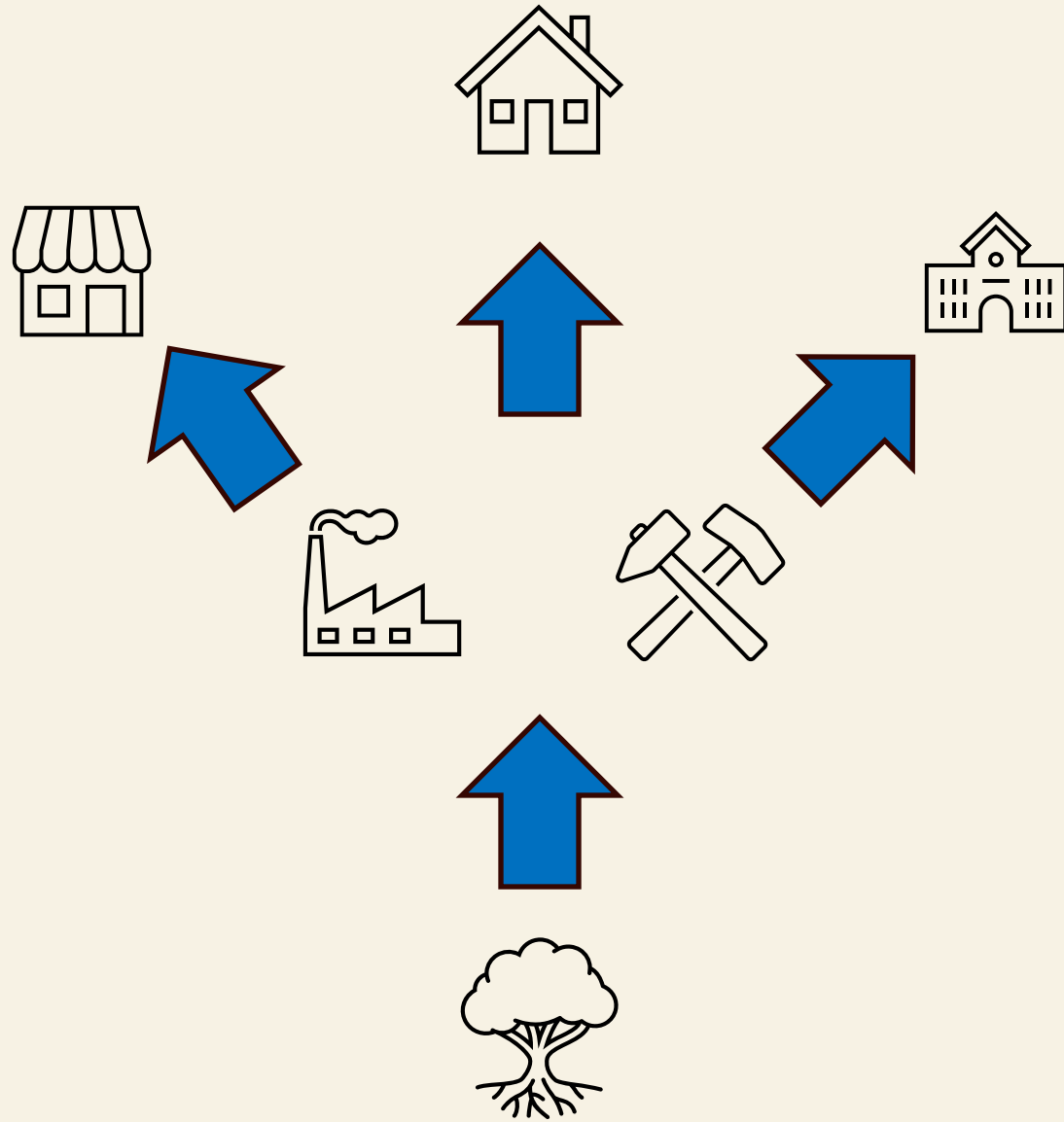


Introduction to the Research Question

- We work in communities big and small, developing land use plans, master plans, and sustainability plans.
- Many communities, especially in more rural parts of BC, have and continue to be dependent on resource extraction (forestry, mining, agriculture, etc.).
- How can land use planning enable — rather than be an obstacle — to a more regenerative economic model?

Rural BC Economies







Economic Trends in the Cowichan Valley

High Job Vacancy rates within natural resource sectors (forestry, agriculture, fishing) & accommodation/food sectors

Increasing reliance on construction & tourism industries

Net positive interprovincial migration over the last 10 years

Growing number of local businesses



The Role of Planning

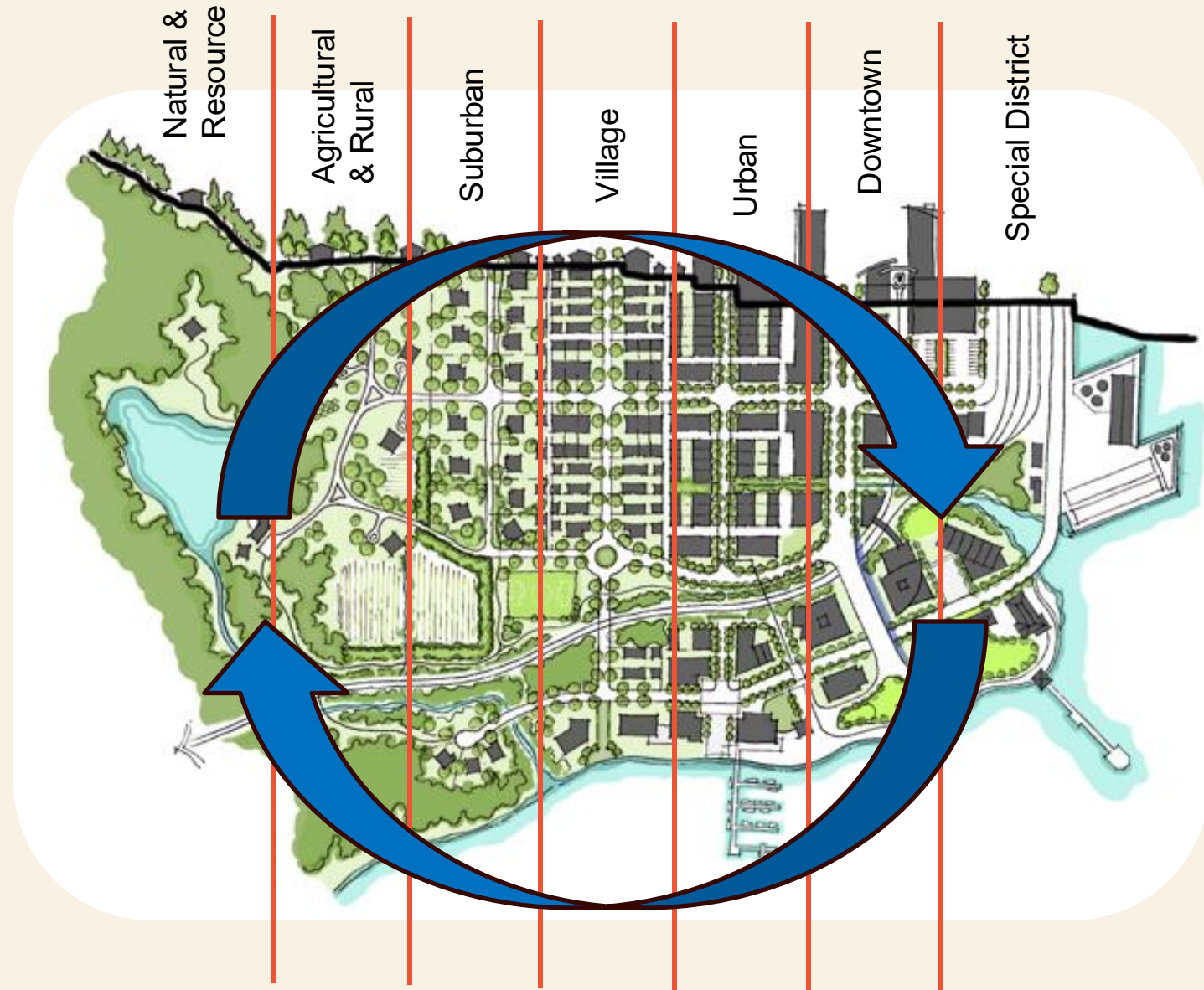
Planners play a key role in **regulating the economic use of land.**

Land use tools (OCPS, Zoning, DPAs, etc.) can **create the regulatory environment necessary** for local businesses to flourish or fail.

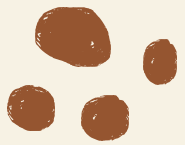


Our Research Question:

How could land use planning encourage economic development that benefits our local economies, our communities, and our ecosystems?

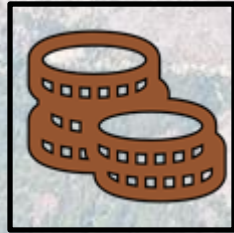


Regenerative Economies Project





**Lack of Jurisdictional
and Fiscal Tools**



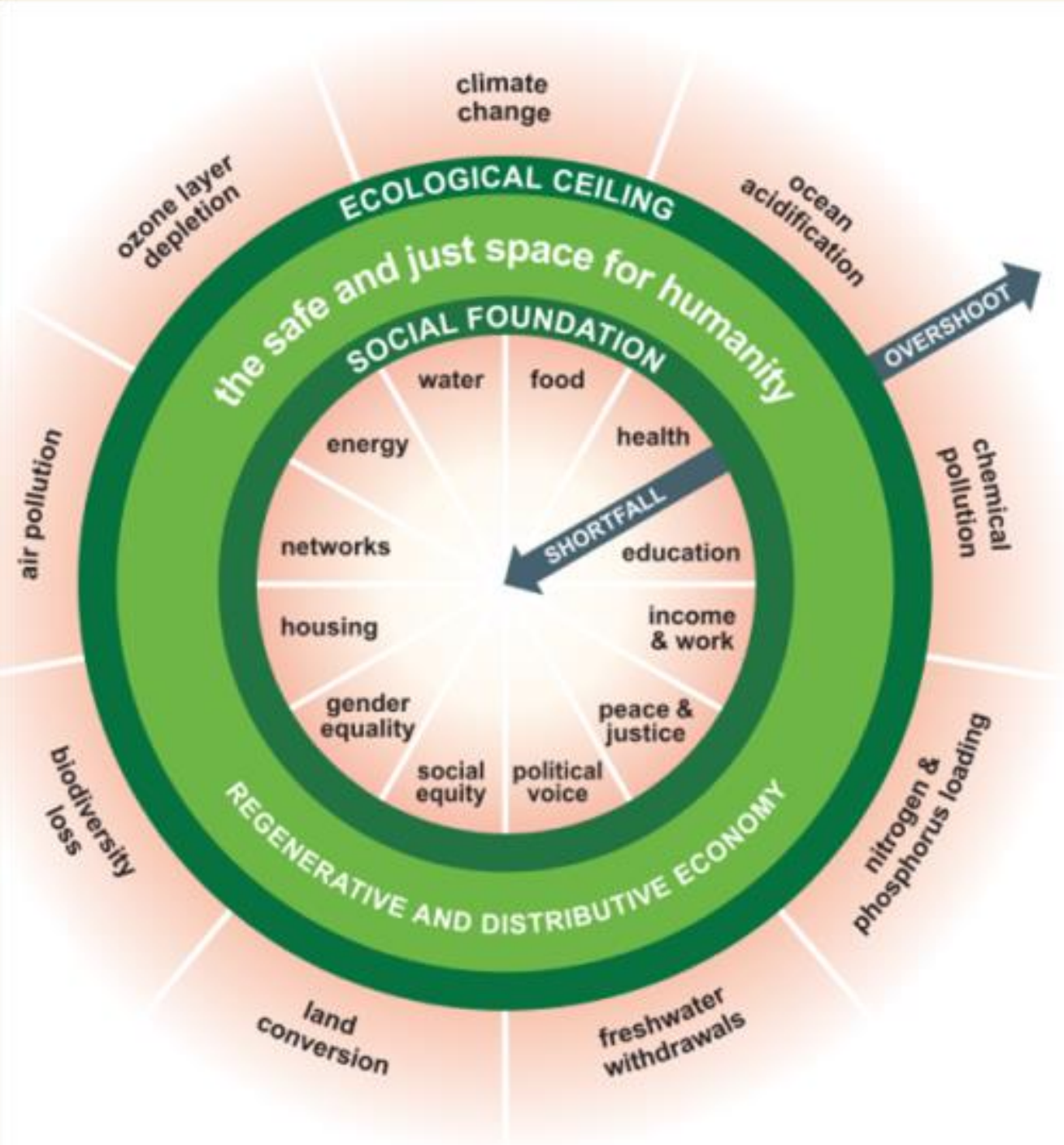
**Resilient Growth
Challenges**



**Downtown
Revitalization**



New Regionalism

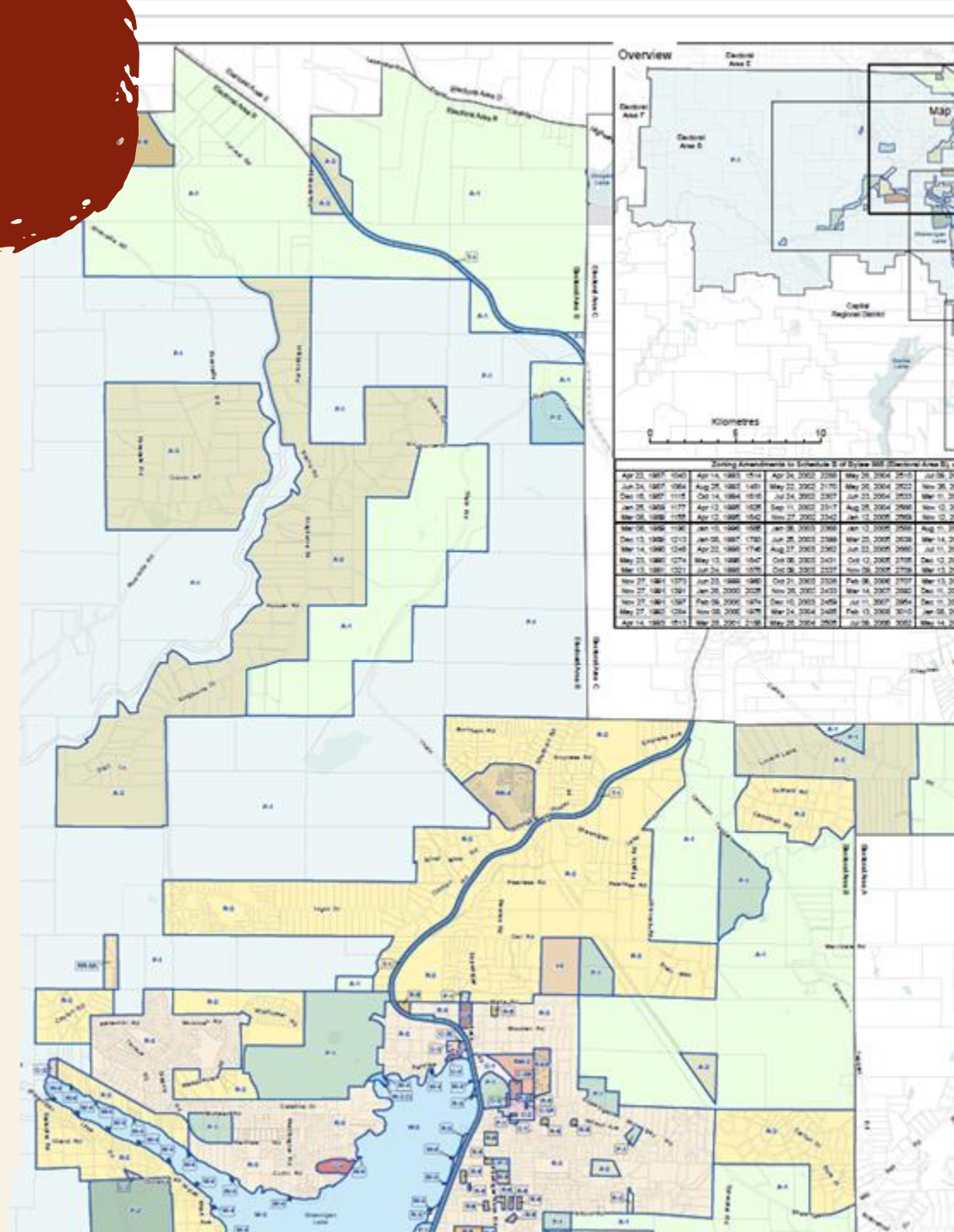


Regenerative Economic Development

Development does not “overshoot” nature’s regenerative capacity and does not “undershoot” on the provision of social and cultural essentials. Regenerative development takes an active role in holistically regenerating the resources it consumes.

Land Use Planning

Regulatory tools (eg. zoning) could allow local governments to create space and encourage regenerative economic development....but this connection is not well understood



(Peris and Bosch, 2020; Rappaport, 2020; Williams, 2023)

Question 1

What are the challenges, opportunities, and solutions associated with current economic development approaches?

Question 2

What are the challenges, benefits and opportunities associated with regenerative economic development ?

Question 3

How could land use planning influence regenerative economic development?

AIM: To explore how land use planning could facilitate the adoption of regenerative economic development within a rural BC region.



Qualitative Research Approach

This research employed an inductive, qualitative research approach, including a reflexive participant aspect.



Case Study: Cowichan Valley, British Columbia

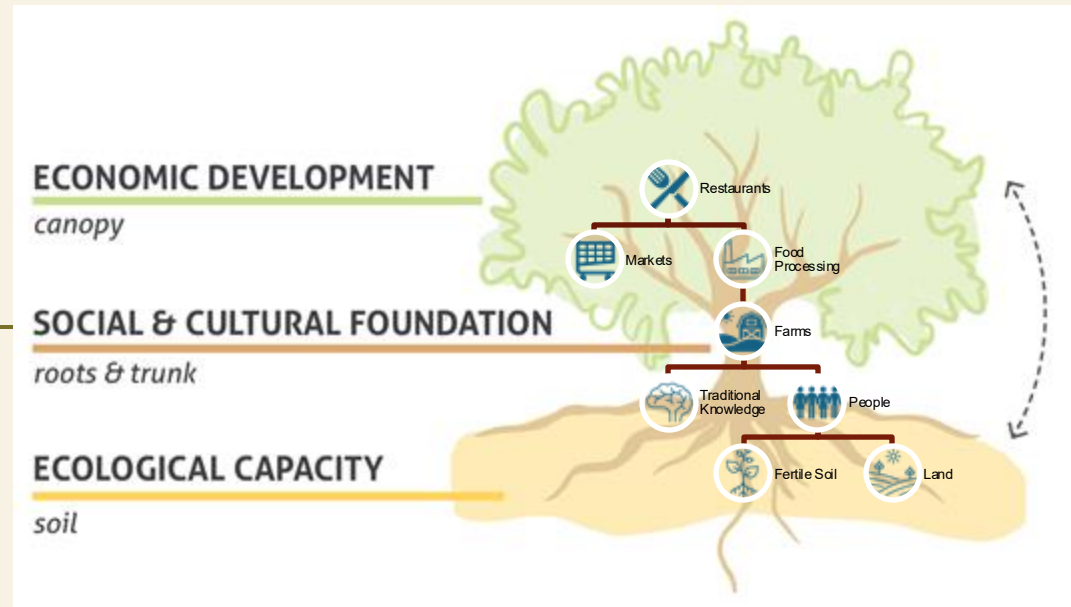
- Four incorporated areas
- Nine unincorporated areas
- Total Population: 89 013
- Average Population per area: 6847



Methodology

Broad-level Interviews

13 Participants



15 Participants

Cowichan Valley Interviews

Methodology

Interview Data
Analysis



Bucket 3:
Broad-level +
Cowichan
Valley

Code 1

Code 2

Code 3

How could land use planning influence
regenerative economic development?



**OCP & RGS
Document Analysis**

- 4 OCPs
- 1 RGS



Broad-level Interviews

Bucket 1: Current Rural Economic Development



Governance

- Capacity
- Communication



Place-based Development

- Not “cookie-cutter”

Bucket 2: Regenerative Economic Development



Knowledge

- Unfamiliar
approach



Pilot Projects

- Need examples

Cowichan Valley Interviews

Bucket 1: Current Rural Economic Development



Governance

- Communication
- Policy & regulation misalignment



Local Business Resources

- Local employment
- Value-adds

Bucket 2: Regenerative Economic Development



Knowledge & Legitimacy

- Need to standardize approach



Knowledge & Legitimacy

- Proof-of-concepts
- Certification programs

Broad-level & Cowichan Valley Interviews

Bucket 3: How could land use planning influence regenerative economic development?



01

Regulatory Guidance

Regulate and encourage regenerative development practices



02

Natural Asset Management

Protect land as an asset, conserve natural resource base



03

Community Involvement

Ensure community voices are integrated into the decision-making process

Official Community Plan & Regional Growth Strategy Analysis

Regulatory Guidance

Agricultural Uses
Industrial Uses
Tourism Uses

Eg. Zoning Bylaw

Natural Asset Management

Protection
Conservation
Inventories

Eg. Development Permit Areas

Community Involvement

Collaboration
Engagement
Application Process

Eg. Permit Application Process

Key Finding 1: Local Governments are Key to Solving Rural Economic Challenges

Challenge

Current application of land use regulations are inhibiting local economic development

Solution

Facilitating and coordinating initiatives to support place-based development, such as events to help connect local producers and manufacturers

Key Finding 2: Regenerative Economic Development is an Evolving Concept



Requires standardization of practices to legitimize the concept

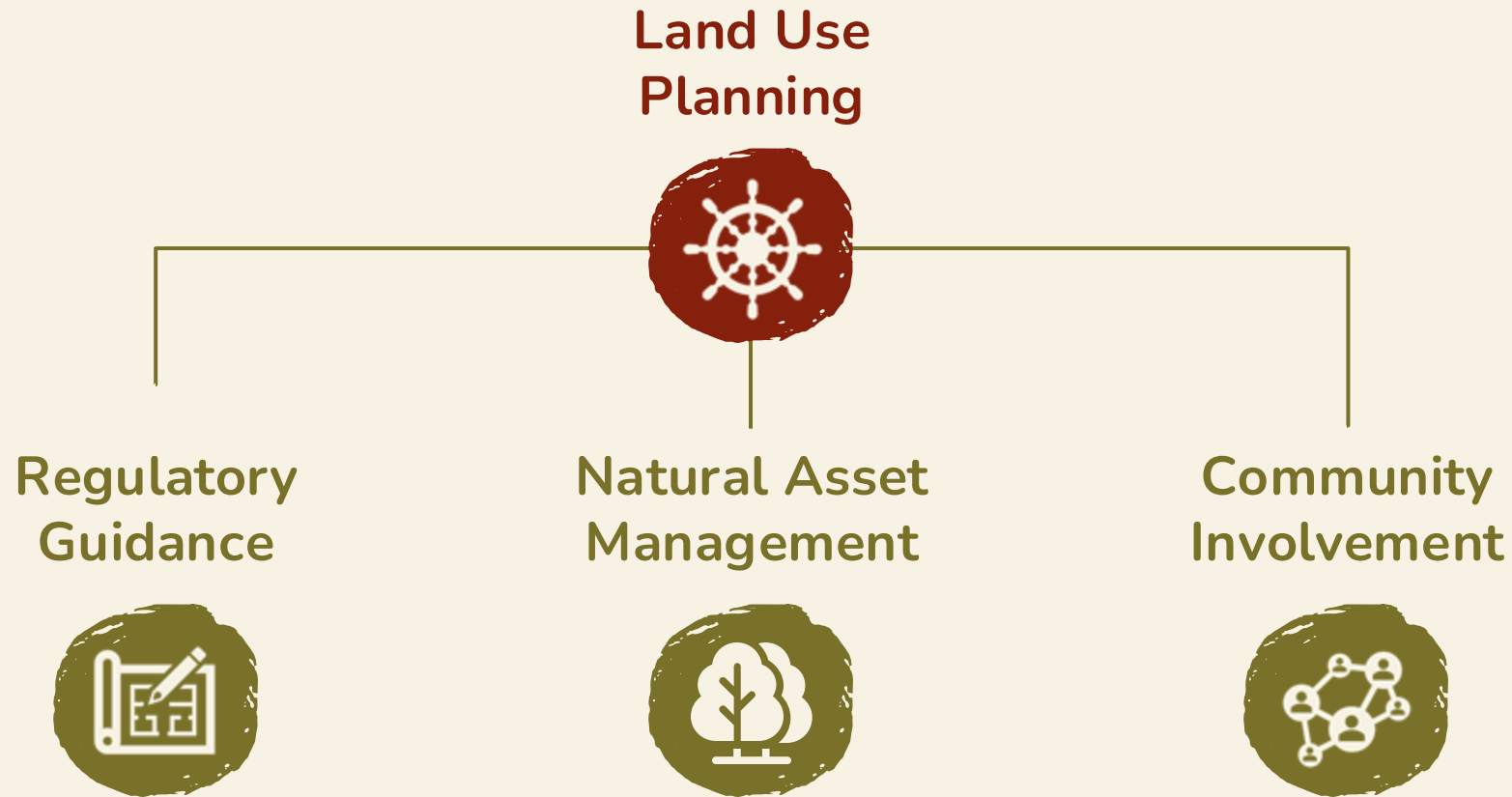


Lack of common understanding locally, regionally, and nationally

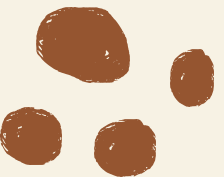
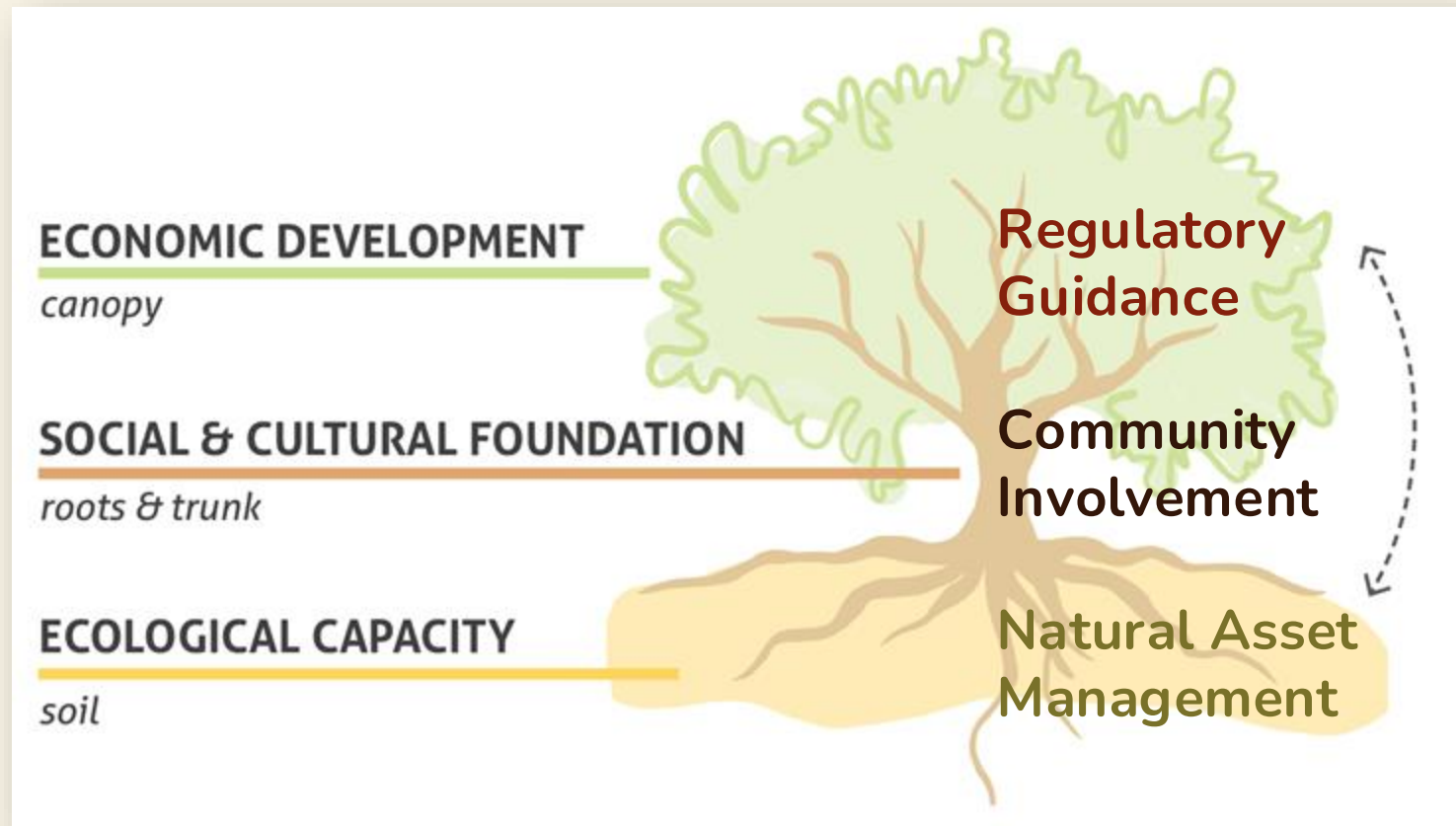


Need more pilot projects and proof-of-concepts

Key Finding 3: Land Use Pathways for Influencing Regenerative Economic Development

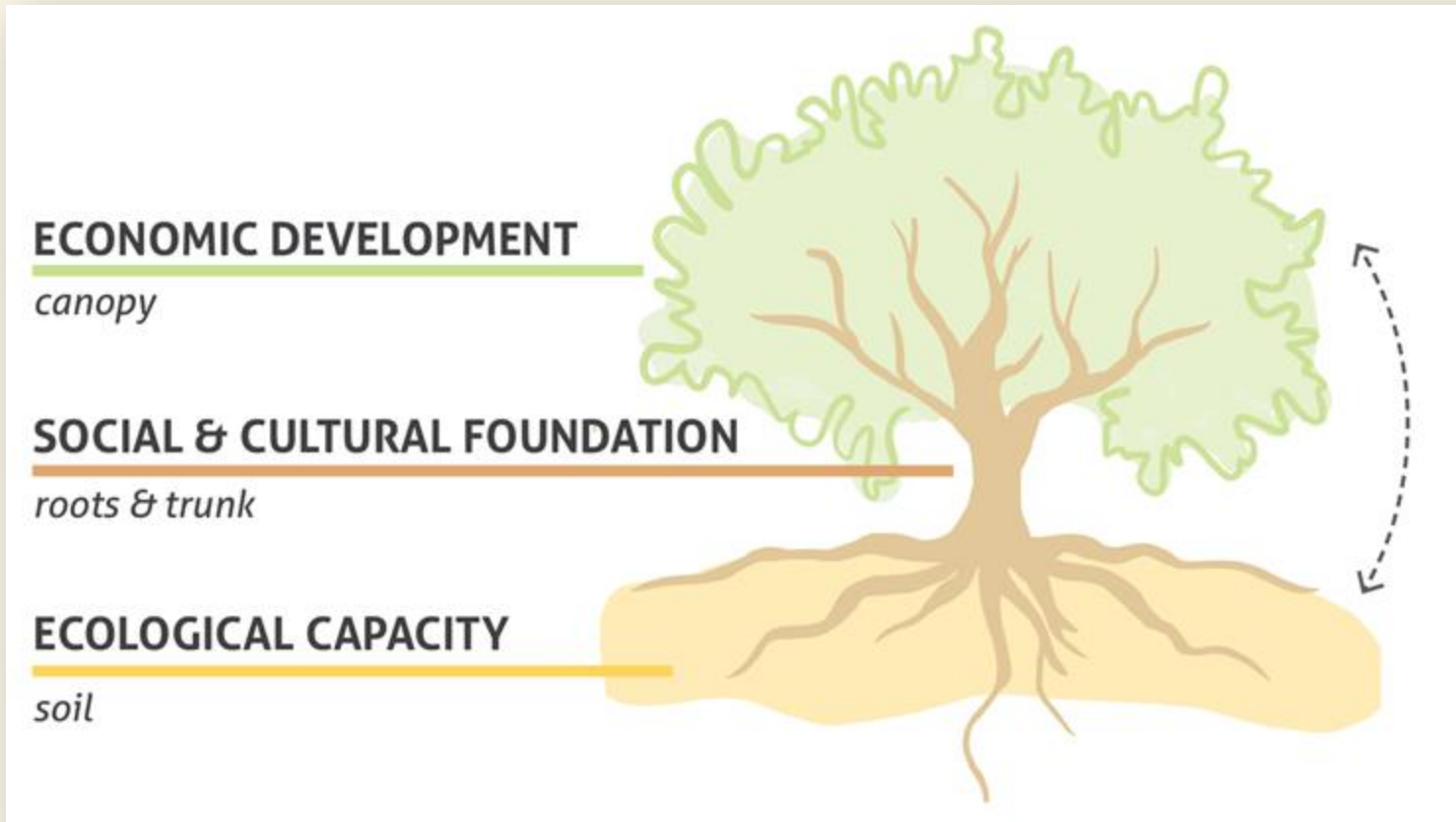


Land Use Framework: to help Facilitate the Adoption of Regenerative Economic Development in rural municipalities and regional districts



Applying the Regenerative Planning Framework:

1) Perform an Inventory



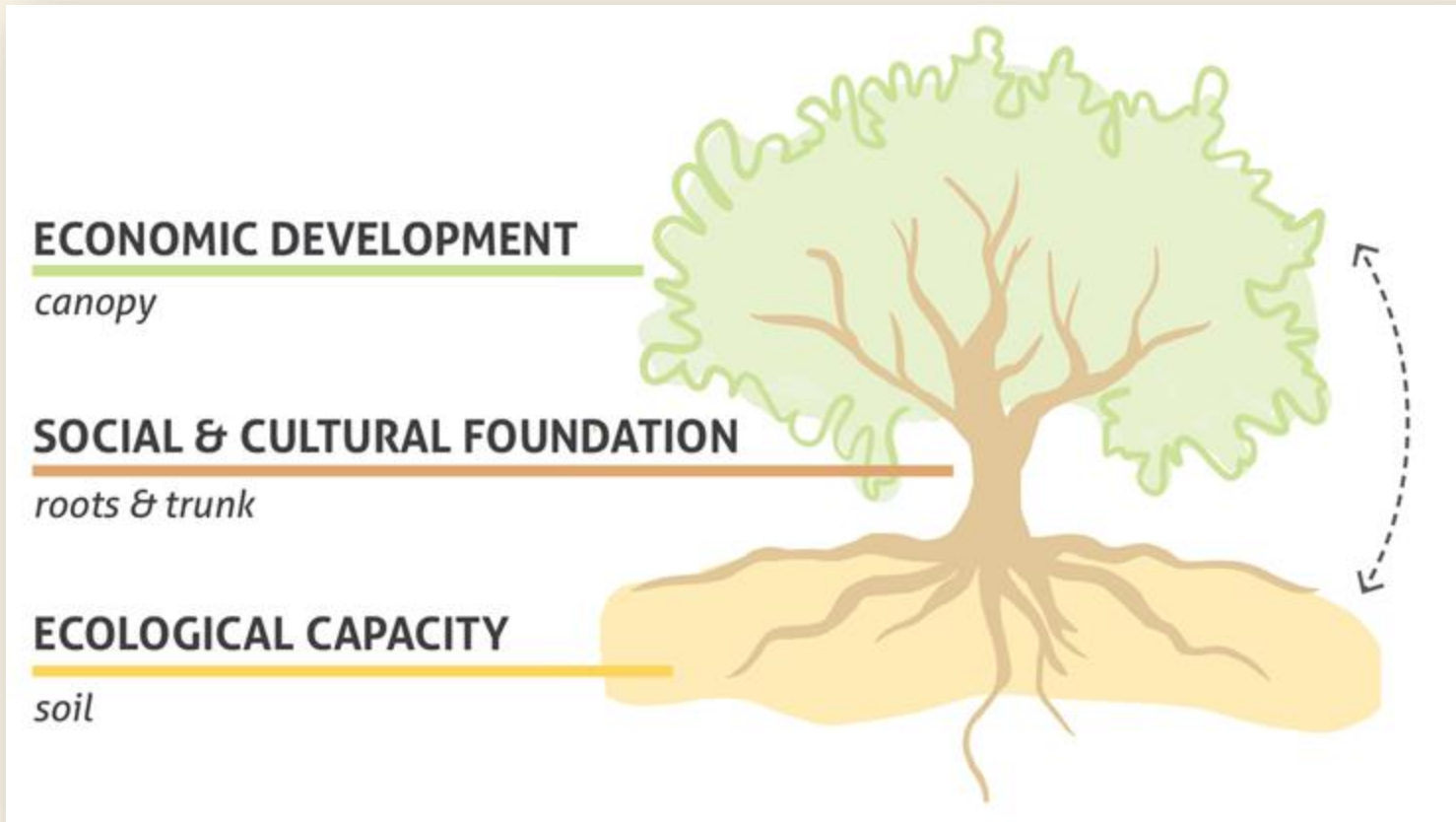
Economic Development: What are our key industries? What materials do these industries import/export?

Community Profile: Who lives here? What do they value?

Environmental Capacity: What are our natural assets? What is their condition?

Applying the Regenerative Planning Framework:

2) Conduct an Assessment



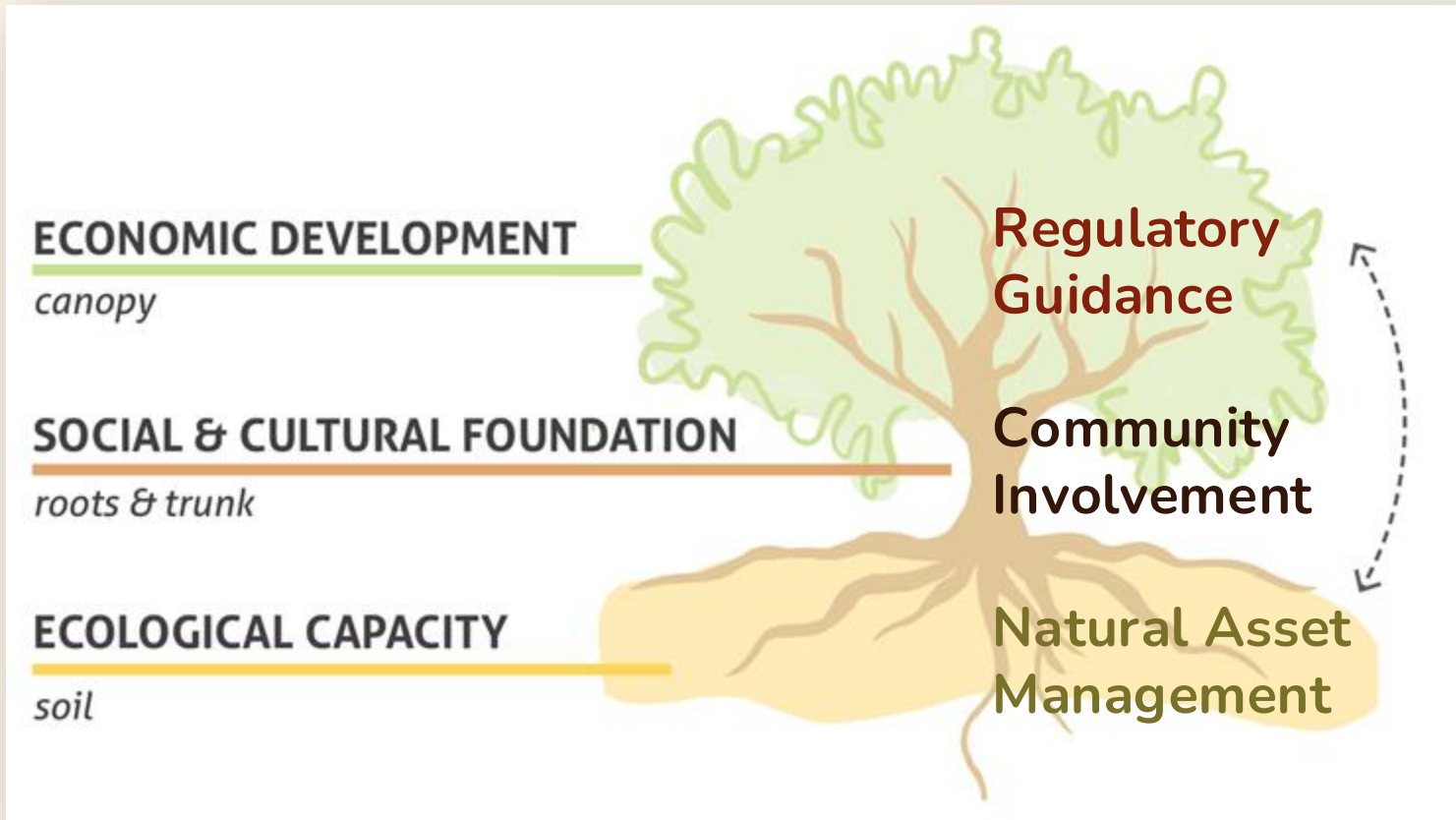
How does our **economic development** align with our community profile and environmental capacity?

How does our **community profile** align with our economic development and environmental capacity?

How does our **environmental capacity** align with our economic development and community profile?

Applying the Regenerative Planning Framework:

3) Develop Planning Actions

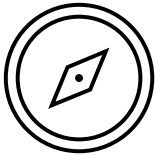


Eg. Zoning Bylaw – permit more mixed-use & strategically locate industrial zones

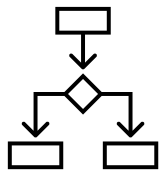
Eg. Collaborate with First Nations on Economic Development Initiatives; implement a Circular Economy Accelerator Program

Eg. Establish covenants, land use buffers, and DPAs to preserve ecological integrity

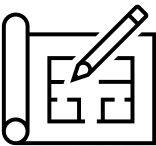
Discussion & Questions



What motivated the District to include regenerative economic visionary language and policy within its OCP?



How has the District implemented this vision? What opportunities & challenges has it encountered?



Has the District employed land use planning to help implement regenerative economic policies?