

2021 Mayor's address

Introduction

Good evening residents of Saanich.

Thank you for joining us for the third annual address of our term.

Last year's, [2020 annual address](#) on behalf of council provided a high level overview of some intentions and achievements. As a reflection on the past year, I would like to go deeper into operations and describe some of the phenomenal outcomes that have been accomplished on your behalf in 2021.

While we acknowledge the disruptive impacts of COVID-19, the Heat Dome, Atmospheric Rivers and the recent snowy winter days, you can be immensely pleased that these have not prevented Saanich moving forward for you. I hope the examples in this evening's "Council's Annual Performance Report" will show that despite these hurdles we continued to deliver the services you need and to make considerable progress in ensuring that Saanich continues to evolve effectively as the most remarkable coastal, urban, forested and rural municipality that it truly is.

Again, this year on behalf of council and staff, I would like to thank our residents and businesses one and all for their adaptability and kind cooperation in the face of challenges brought on by the pandemic and a number of extreme weather events.

I would also like to say "Thank You" to our staff. On your behalf, for example, work crews have frequently been called upon to work 24/7, sometimes at midnight, in freezing temperatures, down deep holes to service the municipal infrastructure that enables the uninterrupted services you all depend on. This collective response, by pulling together, all of us together in such difficult times has been outstanding. It has made the difference. Thank you.

1) Celebrating 2021 accomplishments

Historic MOU with the W̱SÁNEĆ Leadership Council

The W̱SÁNEĆ and the District of Saanich formalized our commitment to reconciliation with the signing of an [ÁTOL,NEUEL \("Respecting One Another"\) Memorandum of Understanding \(MOU\)](#). Tsartlip First Nation Chief Don Tom said "The District of Saanich get their name from our people, and they make decisions about our lands and water without our participation. This MOU is a first step toward changing this relationship and creating a welcoming feeling for W̱SÁNEĆ people in our homelands. We look forward to the exciting and difficult conversations ahead knowing that the District of Saanich is working, in good faith, toward our shared goals of reconciliation."

2) Preserving green space for future generations

Protecting Kings Community Nature Park Green Space

With the [three year community initiative raising some \\$2.115M](#) towards a target of \$2.75M to secure full protection of the KCNGS, Council provided the balance of \$635,000. This fulfilled the decades long community wish to preserve these 6 precious acres of nature space on [Reach Seven of the Bowker Creek](#) next to the Royal Jubilee Hospital.

Expanded Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary

The [acquisition of a new parcel of land](#) expands the 160 acres of the Nature Sanctuary and furthers our goal of preserving green spaces for future generations to enjoy.

Mountain Road forest protected

We are thrilled at the purchase of the [Mountain Road Forest property](#). This nearly-50-acre property in Saanich, a stunning example of a mature urban forest, will be protected for wildlife and people alike forever. Kudos to Habitat Acquisition Trust (HAT), the Capital Regional District (CRD) and all involved.

Received \$1.2 million for ecosystem restoration

We [received \\$1.2 million](#) from the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MOTI) to restore Garry oak and trembling aspen ecosystems. Compensating for ecosystems lost in construction of the McKenzie interchange, three restoration projects are underway in Layritz, Vic Derman and Cuthbert Holmes Parks.

Cuthbert Holmes Park Trail Relocation, Colquitz River improvements

With combined inputs from volunteer stewards, Saanich Parks staff and funding from MOTI remarkable ecological improvements have been achieved in [Cuthbert Holmes Park](#) and along the [Colquitz River](#).

New bridge and trail at Mount Douglas Park

Together with the Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society and aided by the Pacific Salmon Foundation, we completed creek restoration and installation of the [new bridge and new access trails](#) in Mount Douglas Park. Visitors can now cross Douglas Creek without damaging critical sensitive ecosystems and enjoy the new trail which runs from the Douglas Trail to the Churchill Trail.

Committed to UN's Decade on Ecosystem Restoration

We signed a [Proclamation](#) confirming Saanich's support and participation in the [United Nations \(UN\) Decade on Ecosystem Restoration](#) 2021 to 2030.

Released new field guide

We released a beautiful new [field guide](#) to inspire a passion for nature discoveries in parks close to home. Aimed at youth and illustrated by local artist [Kristi Bridgeman](#), this highlights plants, animals and ecosystems in Saanich parks.

Celebrated International Day of Forests

We celebrated the United Nations [International Day of Forests](#) with [a host of projects in support](#) of this year's theme of "Forest restoration: a path to recovery and well-being." Projects included Cuthbert Holmes Park hazard tree mitigation and replanting; annual Tree Appreciation Day; and our tree planting and partnership tree programs. Over the past two years Saanich has planted in excess of 10,000 trees.

Requested input on environmental resilience

We invited [the public to participate](#) in developing Resilient Saanich, our new environmental policy framework for a new biodiversity conservation strategy that is being guided by the [Resilient Saanich Technical Committee](#) working with our staff and consultant.

3) Progress on mitigating climate change

One Planet and the Donut Economy upgrades to our OCP (Planning/Sustainability)

With only [One Earth](#) we need to understand how to live within its means. With seven years now invested into the [One Planet model](#), Council has asked staff to bring a report for council's consideration on refreshing our 2008 [Official Community Plan](#) through the dual lens of the [One Planet](#) and the [Donut Economy](#) frameworks.

Climate Plan report card and Residents Guidebook

We prepared the first annual [Climate Plan Report Card](#) to track progress on our renewed Climate Plan targets and created a [Residents Individual Climate Plan Guidebook](#). Accountability and community involvement are key to our [Climate Plan's](#) success.

Further electrified our municipal fleet (Engineering/Sustainability)

To [reduce emissions from our municipal fleet](#) we added 22 new level 2 electric vehicle (EV) charging stations to our facilities. These support the ongoing electrification of our municipal fleet. This enhancement was made possible in part through funding from Natural Resources Canada's [Zero Emission Vehicle Infrastructure Program](#)

Introduced a new EV Ready rebate

We [announced municipal top-up rebates](#) available to multifamily buildings looking to install EV chargers. Access to at-home EV charging is a critical factor for most households in choosing an EV for their next vehicle. To help households we are topping up existing provincial rebates provided through the CleanBC Go Electric EV Charger Rebate Program.

Launched a new e-bike pilot program

We [piloted a new program](#) providing rebates to income-qualified residents looking to purchase a new electrically assisted bicycle (e-bike). As the first municipal e-bike incentive program in BC, this leadership initiative received national and international acclaim. Estimated to save between 1,000 – 2,000 tonnes of GHG emissions by 2030, the e-bike program is making an important contribution to our Climate Plan goal of cutting community GHG emissions in half by 2030.

Recognized environmental stewards

Every year, we recognize significant contributions to stewarding the environment. [This year's recipients](#) were recognized for park and forest restoration, environmentally sustainable food production, invasive species removal and native planting, supporting allotment gardens, contributing to the health of our lakes and watersheds, and more.

Implemented BYO bag

It's [BYO bag in Saanich](#) with the new Checkout Bag Regulation Bylaw. The purpose of the bylaw is to regulate the use of single-use checkout bags by residents and businesses to help reduce plastic litter and waste in our community and our landfill.

4) Community resilience

Replaced the Gold Slab

The Gold Arena at G.R. Pearkes Recreation Centre [reopened September 27](#) with a new ice slab and rink upgrades. Replacement included the 53 year old Gold Arena ice slab, ice melt pit, dasher boards/glass, arena netting, flooring around the boards and the elevator.

100 years of the Cedar Hill Golf Course, and 70 years of the Cedar Hill Golf Club.

We were delighted to recognize the [100 years golfers of all abilities](#) have enjoyed the natural beauty of the [Cedar Hill Golf Course](#). The only 18 hole municipal golf course on Vancouver Island, we greatly appreciate that for 70 years it has been complemented by the support from the dedicated volunteer members of the Cedar Hill Golf Club.

Recognized for HeArts Together project

Our [HeArts Together Community Art Project](#) received an Honorable Mention in the Program Excellence Award category as part of the 2021 BC Recreation and Parks Association Provincial Awards of Excellence. The community art project was created in response to the COVID-19 pandemic to enable isolated and vulnerable community members to come together creatively while remaining close to home.

Commemorated 100th anniversary of Shelbourne Memorial Trees

Along with the City of Victoria and the Memorial Avenue Committee, we [commemorated the 100th anniversary](#) of the planting of the London Memorial Planetrees on Shelbourne Street.

Tested pop-up dogs parks

To gather information for the upcoming People, Pets and Parks Strategy, we [piloted a pop-up dog park](#) in five parks through the summer.

Rolled out a food truck program

In a successful pilot program, 16 of the region's finest [food truck vendors rotated](#) through Beckwith, Cadboro-Gyro and Gorge Waterway Parks from July until September.

Hosted artist-in-residence community art project

Along with Artist-in-Residence Rain Cabana-Boucher, we [invited residents to participate](#) in Laying Flowers, a community art project for community healing as a response to residential school uncoverings. Focused on diversity, inclusion and supporting our commitments to address racism and moving toward Indigenous Truth and Reconciliation.

Local economy and community resilience

The community resilience of our resident's rests in part on their economic resilience. With this in mind council has funded an [Economic Development Officer](#) and recommitted support for the [South Island Prosperity Partnership](#). We also continued our support for expanded patios for cafes and restaurants. Significant [progress was also achieved](#) by Camosun College on the initiative for a [film studio campus at their Interurban location](#).

Provincial advocacy and Saanich Community Association Network

Community resilience is strengthened when communities can liaise with our MLA's. Facilitated by the Mayor's office, SCAN invited the three Saanich based MLA's including, Ministers Lana Popham, Robert Fleming and Murray Ranking for a successful, first of a kind, in-person "Ask Us Anything" community Open House.

Provincial and Federal advocacy for our residents

Day care, the opioid crisis, mental health, regional transit, access to physicians, housing and climate change are issues affecting our community. To help bring attention from higher governments to these council undertakes extensive advocacy. You can see the advocacy letters and replies [here](#). Additional advocacy work operates from the Mayors desk through the [BC Urban Mayors Caucus](#), and the [working group of our 13 regional Mayors](#).

5) Road safety overview

Road safety is a core community value and a pillar of this Council. We are committed to being national leaders and creating a culture of safety regionally while modernizing our streets.

In the past, roads were designed for maximum efficiency and convenience for vehicles, and actions to improve road safety were typically grounded in the belief that user error was the primary issue needing to be addressed. The traditional road safety paradigm placed a high priority on individuals taking responsibility for safety.

Perspectives around road safety are changing, and engineers, police, and policy makers today are more aware of the complex interactions between road users, road design, and vehicles. Jurisdictions around the world are adopting a systems approach to road safety and responding to issues in a more proactive and comprehensive way. At the same time, in municipalities like Saanich, there is growing support, for multimodal transportation networks, where pedestrians, cyclists and drivers share the roads, and cars are no longer the primary users. Progressive policies to improve safety, increase mode share and reduce carbon emissions are necessary to improve public health, support environmental sustainability and facilitate more liveable communities for people.

This paradigm shift takes time for policy makers and road users to adapt to. Change is needed in the ways that we think about our streets, the way that we act when we are on our streets and ways that we make decisions about our streets. This shift also needs commitment from everyone that contributes to the safety of our streets, from this Council, our Police, our Engineering and operations staff and every road user in Saanich.

Investing in road safety upgrades

Over the next three years Saanich is investing some \$58+ million in road safety upgrades. Just last year, this Council invested an additional \$2 million per year into further modernizing our streets with new staff and capital investments, putting more investment behind our award-winning Active Transportation Plan. These new staff have joined our Engineering team, and are working hard on bringing forward a comprehensive set of progressive road safety policies to Council in the next 90 days that will guide the work of Council and staff over the next year and beyond. Some samples of works completed in 2021 are:

Enhanced pedestrian networks with our neighbours

With the Township of Esquimalt we collaborated to [create an expanded pedestrian walkway](#) over the Gorge on the west side of the Gorge Bridge. Built using the southbound curb lane and protected with concrete curbs this project supports a popular pedestrian loop route around the Gorge inlet connecting both municipalities.

Opened new bike lanes

We [opened new bicycle lanes](#) along Larchwood Drive. Improvements include buffered and protected bikes lanes, planted traffic islands, defined street parking, lighting upgrades, and boulevard tree plantings and form part of the All Ages and Abilities Bicycle Spine identified in our [Active Transportation Plan](#).

Progress on safe routes to schools

In one example, to [address concerns from Marigold School](#) staff and parents, a combination of school zone signs, road markings, and delineators across the length of the zone and speed reader boards were installed. These improvements at three consecutive school zones improve safety for all active transportation users.

Executing on a comprehensive plan

These past years we have worked to implement [25 Active and Safe Routes to School plans](#) and advanced pedestrian signalling upgrades to [20 pedestrian intersections](#).

Progress on Shelbourne Street Improvement Project

Phase One of the [Shelbourne Street](#) project is nearing completion. With the installation of new cycling facilities, pedestrian safety and transit improvements, and underground infrastructure complete, the renewed asphalt surface is scheduled. We thank residents for their patience with this exceedingly complex undertaking.

ATAC working group on possible speed reductions for rural roads

We are a rural and urban municipality. In rural Saanich, traffic is a concern for residents and vulnerable road users. These concerns have been championed by [Livable Roads in Rural Saanich](#), the [Prospect Lake Community Association](#) and others. Responding to these concerns, on [October 28th 2021](#) the [Active Transportation Advisory Committee](#), formed a working group to help create a policy framework for a possible pilot program on speed reductions for our rural roads.

Upgrade of traffic intersection at West Saanich and Sparton Roads

This evening, Council will be looking to move forward on awarding the [\\$3,218,413 \(+GST\) tender](#) for upgrading the [traffic control](#), pedestrian crossings, safe route to school and All Ages and Abilities Active Transportation infrastructure at the intersection of West Saanich and Sparton Road.

Working on new approach for active transportation on Tillicum Road

Hearing the ongoing concerns of residents about traffic and the lack of a AAA Active Transportation friendly infrastructure, at the [October 18, 2021, Council](#) meeting we directed staff to coordinate with the Township of Esquimalt on active transportation designs for Tillicum Road as soon as possible and to identify the Tillicum Road from Arena Way to Tillicum Bridge Active Transportation Project as a short term priority in the Active Transportation Plan 2023/24 refresh

Committed to doing more

Indicative of Council's resolve to do more, and also on this evenings agenda for Council's consideration, is a [Notice Of Motion](#) and [Report](#) that recommends we direct staff to provide reports on phased options to reduce the time frame of our Active Transportation Plan from 25 years to 15 years, and to advise on how to move forward toward implementing Vision Zero.

6) Protective services and public safety

Enhanced critical fire department partnerships

We [updated our mutual and automatic aid agreements](#) with the fire departments of Central Saanich, Highlands, Oak Bay and Victoria. These ensure critical services for our citizens through shared wildland firefighting, specialty rescue, and other major incident resources.

Provided virtual volunteer assistance

Saanich leads the region, and indeed BC, with the high technical capability of its Emergency Support Service Volunteers. Our volunteers [provided virtual assistance](#) to wildfire evacuees throughout BC for several weeks this summer.

New Chief Constable

With the retirement of [Chief Constable Scott Green](#) in January 2022, and after engaging in a thorough and competitive process, the [Saanich Police Board](#) was delighted to announce the internal promotions of Dean Duthie to Chief Constable and Robert Warren to Deputy Chief. Together with current Deputy Chief Gary Schenk, these three will form the Department's senior leadership team.

Leadership in police recruitment

The enlightened human resource and operational policies brought forward over January 2019-January 2022 by the team led by [Chief Constable Scott Green](#), together with the combined support from Saanich Council, our residents and the [Police Board](#) have enabled the Department to be a model [employer of choice](#).

Saanich “Safe Place” program

The Saanich Police Department has initiated a [Safe Place](#) program. The program’s mission is to increase safety for members of the IBPOC, 2SLGBTQ, unhoused or other vulnerable communities. Community partners provide a safe haven for anyone with safety concerns.

Saanich Community Safety Office at Uptown

With support from Uptown, our Police Department is opening a [Community Safety Office](#). Trained Community Safety volunteers working with Saanich Police will focus on sharing information and connecting people to the community resources they may need.

Safety Improvement Award

Recognizing our many actions to reduce injuries, illness, disease and fatalities for all our staff Saanich [won the Safety Improvement Award](#) at the BC Municipal Safety Association’s annual awards celebration.

7) Organizational excellence

Received awards for budgeting and financial reporting

For the 14th consecutive year, our Finance Department received the Canadian Award for Financial Reporting from the [Government Finance Officers Association](#) (GFOA) for its 2019 financial statements. For the 12th consecutive year, Saanich received the Distinguished Budget Presentation Award from GFOA for its [2020 to 2024 Financial Plan](#).

Encouraged budget education

We [launched an online budget education tool](#) to coincide with our budget meetings for the second time. The tool helps citizens to learn about the financial planning process while Council deliberates the draft plan. The real-time results allow residents to see how budget changes may impact their property taxes.

Completed first mid-term citizen survey

Our 2021 mid-term survey heard from 870 citizens on municipal services, safety, life quality, value for taxes and Council decision making etc. Eighty-eight per cent of residents rate their overall quality of life in Saanich as good or very good according to [citizen survey results](#).

Permanently adjusted late property tax penalties

Council endorsed an ongoing plan to [lessen the impact of late payment penalties](#) on property taxes for all Saanich property owners.

Modernized our Council Procedures Bylaw

To improve the operation, transparency and efficiency of our meetings, council asked staff to prepared a [revised council procedure](#) bylaw and invited public input. A two-year process to complete, significant benefits of the [modernized bylaws](#) are already being realized.

8) Improving opportunities for housing

Approved Housing Strategy

Council [approved a comprehensive, 10-year Housing Strategy](#) that provides clear direction and actions to continue to increase the supply, affordability and diversity of housing options to accommodate a broad range of housing needs. The Housing Strategy was developed through a 13 month process, with the core content of the Strategy generated by the [Saanich Housing Task Force](#). The strategy focuses on seven main objectives, including increasing affordable and supportive housing; promoting and protecting rental housing; supporting housing diversity and increasing supply; reducing barriers to housing development; strengthening partnerships; enhancing community engagement; and understanding housing demand and addressing land speculation.

Development process review by KPMG

Council adopted all 15 recommendations of the [KPMG review](#) to improve the service delivery and capacity of our Development Application Process.

In conclusion

There is much more that could be listed, but in this address, I hope you see that your council and staff have worked collaboratively and diligently through the challenging times of 2021 to provide you with effective and continuous services. In a changing world, we have also sought to future-proof and to improve our operations and your opportunities. This work will continue through 2022.

Moving forward, we will continue to seek your input to help us understand and prioritize the initiatives that will make Saanich an even better community. Your council is open to receiving your questions, concerns, ideas and feedback.

In closing, I would like to thank every member of Council. Together, these individuals form a dedicated, accomplished and hardworking set of outstanding colleagues. It is my privilege to work with each and every member of Council.

To Saanich staff and to all our residents, I look forward to continuing our collaborative work of governance on your behalf through the rest of this term. Thank you.

Fred Haynes,
Saanich Mayor