

**Regional Planning for Growth Containment in Unincorporated Rural Areas:
The Place of Complete Communities and Agricultural Urbanism?**

A Case Study of the RDN's Rural Village Centre Strategy

By

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ABSTRACT

Regional Planning for Growth Containment in Unincorporated Rural Areas: The Place of Complete Communities and Agricultural Urbanism? A Case Study of the RDN's Rural Village Centre Strategy

Unincorporated areas within a regional planning context are often of an essential ‘in-between’ nature — facing unique community-specific and site-specific challenges. These challenges include: identifying appropriate growth management strategies, examining how growth containment is best effected, and determining how this is best integrated in the unincorporated rural area context — especially where these areas are adjacent to rapidly growing incorporated urban-region centres. There are also considerations around how concepts, such as Complete Communities and Agricultural Urbanism, can be applied to such contexts — and how such concepts may facilitate a tighter, and more seamless, relationship between the typically polar opposite interventions under the banners of regional planning and community design.

This practicum examines how the concepts of Complete Communities and Agricultural Urbanism are and/or could be applied to unincorporated rural areas as part of an approach to a combination of planning and design — as placemaking. The Regional District of Nanaimo’s Rural Village Centre (RDN RVC) strategy provides the main case study context, along with several other ostensibly comparable BC regional district settings as potentially informative precedents.

It was discovered that there are increasing linkages between regional planning and community design that may be further advanced via a placemaking perspective. Of special note are the opportunities associated with adaptations of the concepts of Complete Communities and Agricultural Urbanism in the unincorporated rural context; referencing these concepts can enhance the linkages between the ‘unincorporated rural settings’ and their ‘incorporated’ municipal neighbours. The research has helped to identify where there may be room for improvement around RDN RVC strategies, and how they may be better applied in the future.

DEDICATION

To my parents for teaching me that education is ongoing.

And to Ben for his support, commitment, compassion
and patience through this process.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of Purpose

This practicum investigates regional planning for *growth containment* in a particular type of rural area, namely, unincorporated rural areas — areas not organized as a municipality, without a local elected council of their own. Compared to their incorporated urban municipality neighbours, these unincorporated areas have generally been subject to very little planning in the past, and have experienced little or no community design. There has usually been little or no formal planning either *for* the community or *with* the community, in part because of the lack of formal organization. Regional growth strategizing often represents their first real engagement with public planning.

Planners for rapidly growing regions often face the challenge of managing urban growth while preserving such rural landscapes and communities. Rural areas at the advancing edge of urban centres are almost inevitably changing, in ways that can appear to some as a “lack of attention paid to rural communities” (Crowe, 2011, p. 222). There is thus a growing impetus to better understand such changing rural places and the special challenges represented by unincorporated status. How might planning and design better serve such areas? How might the communities in question play a more active role, in ways that are more meaningful, respectful, and valued — planning and design that is more by the community, for the community? In an effort to better understand and relate to this unincorporated rural realm of special-case communities, this practicum will not only look at conventional regional planning for growth containment in such areas, but

will also examine the place of *Complete Communities* and *Agricultural Urbanism* in rural settings planning and design, with *placemaking* in mind — placemaking by the people in, and of, the places in question. This appears to be an unconventional view of planning as the literature and current practice documentation does not provide similar studies: however, the issue is relevant as growth and development at the urban/rural fringe is an issue that continues to vex planners, and the lack of “place” in these areas continues to vex their inhabitants.

This practicum is grounded in a case study of the Regional District of Nanaimo’s rural village centre (RVC) policies. These policies will be examined from a planning as *placemaking* perspective — with *Complete Communities* and *Agricultural Urbanism* in mind —to inform an assessment of and consideration for their enhancement. The larger interest is in how such themes and strategies might serve, in general, to better integrate regional planning and community design, two activities that, by the nature of their scales, are normally poles apart, and rarely ‘on the same page’.

1.2 Project Background Context

1.2.1 *The Regional Approach*

The vast majority of Canadians — over 80% — live in urban areas (Statistics Canada, 2008; Bollman & Clemenson, 2008). Regional planning extends beyond urban areas to include surrounding rural areas and resource lands. Spanning a variety of landscapes, regional planning in growth strategizing contexts often has to contend with complex urban environments experiencing “metropolitan development pressures” where

“the lines between metropolitan and rural places are [sic] becoming increasingly blurred” (Arendt et al., 1994, p. 308).

In British Columbia, unincorporated rural areas are usually in electoral areas (organized for representative purposes) within regional districts. These are areas outside of an incorporated municipality. In population growth settings such as Central Vancouver Island, residential expansion is occurring outside of the main urban cores (largely in unincorporated rural areas) with considerable conversion of rural lands to urban-style uses. In this context, urban-type growth and associated dispersal of residential development present regional planning challenges to local governments, regional districts, and their planners (Tomalty, 2002, p. 432). As population increases, there is a need to find a place for newcomers to settle. Decentralized settlement patterns result in loss of wildlife habitat and agricultural lands, increased traffic congestion, and an increased cost of living (Tomalty, 2002, p. 433). How can regional planning manage and contain growth in rural areas, in order to minimize negative impacts and optimize positive outcomes?

1.2.2 Growing Regions and Expanding Urban Centres

Rural areas are often considered a “hinterland for the city” (Coleman, 1977, p. 10), but what happens as rural areas start to grow and take on more urban-like characteristics? The rural-urban interface is no longer a simple relationship of polarities; it has evolved into *multiple middle landscapes* which, in turn, create complexities for regional planning (Daniels, 1999, p. 40-41). Rural areas in the proximity of growing urban centres challenge established urban-privileging planning paradigms. In particular,

“city-centre planning is beginning to give place to a more integrated approach (of environmental planning)” (Coleman, 1977, p. 11). Rural demographers have investigated the rural context and have identified that demographics, employment, income and social capital features here are different from their urban counterparts (Bollman & Reimer, 2009). Further, Bollman and Reimer (2009) suggest that rural areas differ from one another as a result of variation in rural site differences linked to population densities and distance to metro cores. As the influence of urban centres reaches into unincorporated rural areas, the differentiation becomes blurred, and more challenging in terms of an appropriate planning/design response.

Rural landscapes and environments are changing. As cities grow physically, the rural areas nearby are also growing in complexity (Bollman & Clemenson, 2008). “Rural areas are no longer dominated by agriculture and their composition increasingly mirrors that of economies in more urban areas” (Bosworth, 2010, p. 966). The rural environment may be exuding urban-like characteristics, but is not considered urban in a formal, official sense. These areas are “invalidated as a rural environment, without being validated as an urban environment” (Coleman, 1977, p. 25). How might these urban-like places, in otherwise rural settings, be better *managed* and *contained* in regional growth strategizing?

1.2.3 Growth Strategizing: Unincorporated Rural Areas on the Edge of the City

As the population of major urban areas increases, the adjacent rural areas may also experience growth. In BC, the majority of these rural areas are unincorporated, generally with one elected area representative — for a very large geographic area —

looking after their interests. How might those planning and strategizing for such unincorporated rural areas best respond to *urbanizing* development pressures?

Rural areas near the edge of a growing city typically have, in addition to long-time residents, many residents who have moved into the community in the past five years (Bollman, 2010, p. 50). Once settled into the community, these rural residents living near the edges of the urban area are “less likely to move” and more likely to be “living as a family unit” (Bollman, 2010). It appears as if families (households with children) comprise a large portion of recent rural residents. This will need to be considered when creating and implementing policies and regulations associated with growth management. These urban-rural edge areas are experiencing not only growth pressures (in terms of number of people and new development) but also a strengthening sense of community. In this context, the adoption of more explicit *community-based* and *community-sensitive* growth management policies may be more popular (Platt, 2004), if regional planning can stretch to encompass such community design detail considerations.

While regional planning may feature broad policies — such as *manage growth*, *contain new development*, and *preserve agricultural land* — and typically outline how such policies should be implemented, regional planning does not generally consider in much depth how rural places are not only different from urban ones, but also how rural places may be different from one another, as unique communities. While rural areas may be ostensibly similar in terms of broad characteristics, it is critical to appreciate that “no two rural communities are the same” (Bollman & Reimer, 2009, p. 140).

Regional planning is often entrenched within broad-brush growth management or growth containment strategizing (SmartGrowth BC, 2008). Within a given region, each

specific area provides a unique context and set of characteristics. Some areas may welcome growth management as a way to mitigate problematic growth, whereas others may welcome the same policies to encourage desired growth. In the context of the Regional District of Nanaimo, the aim is to contain growth within identified areas, thus “keeping urban settlement compact, protecting the integrity of rural and resource areas, protecting the environment, increasing servicing efficiency, and retaining mobility within the region” (Regional District of Nanaimo, 2012a).

For unincorporated rural areas, which do not have a council or mayor of their own, how are such regional issues best addressed, in the context of local/community uniqueness? Currently the majority of issues are addressed by an (arms-reach) Regional Board. Though the Board acts as the decision-making body — what, or who, guides development decisions and choices? Are there tools or processes that might better discern, and respond to, such planning issues? The residents of each distinct area within a region can be expected to insist upon a regard for its own unique characteristics. How can regional planning be sensitive to such needs for nuancing? Might a placemaking approach be of assistance, or a variation of the Complete Communities approach now being advocated in the planning/design literature? Or, given the rural setting, is there a case for pursuing principles associated with an even more recent advocacy of Agricultural Urbanism?

It is proposed that all these notions may merit consideration as means to better connect the need for regional-scale planning (as growth strategizing policy), alongside community-based design plans, especially in complex urban-rural interface contexts.

1.2.4 Complete Communities, Agricultural Urbanism, and Placemaking

The idea of a *complete community* is centred around creating a place where people can live, work, play, recreate, and have their general day-to-day needs met (Alexander & Tomalty, 2002). Compared to current development practices, implementing the Complete Communities concept is considered to be a *smart growth* approach, with a tie to implementing practices of sustainability. While this concept is often promoted and advocated in urban areas, is it applicable in a regional planning context where rural areas spatially predominate? What is the place of Complete Communities in such a context? Does it necessitate a region being actively interpreted as *a community of communities*?

As an emerging policy, *Agricultural Urbanism* (AU) offers a “framework for integrating a wide range of sustainable food and agriculture system elements into a community at a site, neighbourhood, or on a city-wide scale” (de la Salle & Holland, 2010, p. 240). This concept demonstrates how planning policy fits in both urban and rural realms — and all realms in-between. Although the AU approach focuses specifically on food systems and the integration of food systems across regions, it offers a strategy for understanding how to better intervene intra-regionally as well as inter-regionally. Might AU concepts, for example, provide an opportunity to better infuse regional planning with community design considerations, tied to the transect framework at the heart of AU? Can an integrative approach, such as Agricultural Urbanism, create a policy space where concepts of *rural village* and *urban village* can be placed on the same page, or at least in the same framework?

When considering the meshing of concepts such as Complete Communities and

Agricultural Urbanism, planning policies will naturally need to be more cognizant of each community's unique context, and the value of design considerations. Might this provide a natural action space for planning as placemaking? Placemaking is essentially the pursuit of “collective aims that are relational, situational, and inclusive” vis-a-vis a given area or site (Schneekloth & Shibley, 2000, p. 133). Regions are comprised of many places, with each place — unique and individualistic at its heart — playing up, and playing to, its own unique characteristics as a distinct community (Bollman & Reimer, 2009; Hovey, 2003). Communities are places more than they are spaces, and communities can exist at different scales. In this way a region can be reframed as a community of communities. This framing can connect the highest most abstract sense of a region with the most grounded grass-rooted sense of a distinct community, as integral components of the region.

Many current planning trends are focused on the community scale, for example, the pedestrian realm, neighborhood-scale, and sustainability (Katz, 1994; Duany et al., 2003, cited in Lanham, 2007). Can a strictly regional approach be justified in the context of such evolving trends? Might there be some value in some sophistication to incorporate concepts of completeness, framings such as Agricultural Urbanism, and approaches such as placemaking to better align with the spectrum, or continuum, of rural, *rurban*, and urban environments? As touched on earlier, placemaking can be mobilized on a regional as well as community (or site) scale, if regions are viewed as a community of communities, with multiple diverse characteristics.

For the purpose of this MDP project, the case study of the Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) serves to ground the exploration of all these considerations. From an

abstract perspective, the RDN comprises incorporated urban spaces and unincorporated rural spaces, and all spaces in between; from a more grounded perspective all these spaces are *places* — past, present, and/or potential. From this wider perspective, the RDN represents an ideal venue to examine Complete Communities and Agricultural Urbanism, urban/rural community placemaking, and the better connecting of regional planning and community design. Project outcomes will illuminate rural area growth management, contextualize the RDN's policies on *rural village centres*, and identify opportunities for better connecting regional planning and community design to mutual benefit. There will also be a consideration of the associated implications for planners and planning, especially in terms of education.

1.3 Research Problem Context

Compared to urban planning, there is significantly less literature focused on rural-based planning and design concepts (Crowe, 2011). How can those planners in regional authorities, encompassing unincorporated rural areas, achieve advances in rural planning if there is limited availability of precedents, case studies, theory literature, and specific tools and resources? Having been raised in a rural region, and with a strong curiosity around such considerations, I am very interested in potential implications and possible outcomes for planners responsible for rural areas in general, and for rural communities in particular, in otherwise urban-dominated regional settings. This MDP project will seek to investigate how general planning policies, invariably and effectively privileging urban settings, are consciously or unconsciously adapted for application in rural settings. The line of inquiry will feature consideration of particular themes — Complete Communities,

Agricultural Urbanism, and placemaking — that might enable a better policy translation for emerging settlement centres in rural settings, where there is a strong desire to reflect and respect rural values, despite urbanizing influences. The underlying hypothesis is that these themes, together, can better connect the necessary regional planning and community design, to mutual benefit.

1.4 Research Questions and Underlying Research Problem Considerations

1. *How do regional planners, with a responsibility for planning rural areas on the fringes of urban areas, apply appropriate growth management strategies? How is growth containment best effected? How is the urban and the rural integrated to harness the best of each?*

The underlying problem is viewed in terms of rethinking regions as a community of communities, opening to the possibility of a combination of *urban growth containment* and *rural landscape enhancement* via more explicit urban, rather than rural, village-making (i.e. urban villaging) rooted in community design — planning and development *by* the community in question, *for* the community in question, and reflecting an approach to planning as placemaking (at both regional and community scales).

2. *How can Complete Communities be applied and framed for rural settings? Is there a place for Agricultural Urbanism in such a context? What is the place of community design in regional planning?*

The underlying problem is viewed in terms of a better connection between

regional planning and community design. Often poles apart, they may potentially be better integrated by conceiving a region in terms of a community of communities, invoking *completeness* in this dual context, and privileging the rural connection context through an emphasis on Agricultural Urbanism. Planning as placemaking thus involves a combined consideration of the place of Complete Communities and Agricultural Urbanism, to better respect rural settings.

3. *How might regional planning and community design be better bridged in rural growth containment contexts? What are the implications for planners and planning?*

The underlying problem is viewed as how, in practice, to better integrate regional planning (in rural settings) and community design (for urban villages) by mobilizing the concept of Agricultural Urbanism alongside the concept of Complete Communities via placemaking. How desirable is such integration? How feasible is such a mobilization? What alternatives or critiques might merit consideration? And what might all this mean for planners and planning in such settings?

1.5 Scope of Work

This MDP will deliberately focus on bringing greater attention to planning and design that is better fitted to a rural context, albeit urbanizing rural contexts, where extra effort — perhaps even extraordinary effort — is required to reflect and respect rural values and characteristics. Determining what constitutes rural in such contexts, including different

connotations and manifestations of rural, will be important to ensure that this critical context is well understood. The investigation will address regional planning for growth containment strategizing, with particular regard for the potential and possibilities relating to an inter-twining of placemaking, Complete Communities, and Agricultural Urbanism. The general terrain to be covered is that between regional planning on the one hand, and community design on the other. The MDP will seek a broader and deeper understanding of unincorporated rural areas near expanding (incorporated) urban municipalities.

Having a strong grasp of what is considered *rural*, and how this might differ from or complement the *urban*, will be a prime concern in the MDP. Regional growth management, especially growth containment initiatives, ushers rural planning much more prominently onto the regional planning stage. Rural area growth brings the spectre, if not the reality, of urbanization; what should remain rural, and why? All urban areas have rural roots that have evolved to varying degrees. One, the urban, seems to trump — to cancel out — the other, the rural. The completeness of one is at the expense of the completeness of the other. *Agriculture* and *urban* have come to be regarded as a contradiction in terms. Is this the fate of all rural areas on the leading edge of urban centre expansion? A more sophisticated regional planning, with better connections to community design, might change the urban-rural planning game.

The Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) will serve as a case study to further explore regional planning in and for unincorporated rural areas. The recent adoption of an updated Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) provides a current *take* on regional growth management planning for such rural areas, which spatially dominate the jurisdiction of the RDN. This case study offers insight into a current example of managing growth in

rural area settlement centres in close proximity to an expanding urban centre, the City of Nanaimo, effectively at the urban-rural interface.

The RDN's adoption of policies for Rural Village Centres (RVC), with direction to evolve these centres into Complete Communities (Regional District of Nanaimo, 2011, p. 29, 51-53) offers a rich current context to investigate the inter-relationship of growth containment, placemaking, Complete Communities, and applications of Agricultural Urbanism. The MDP represents an opportunity for an assessment of this inter-meshing, and for an exploration of the possibilities for evolving the strategy — and related desirable tactics. Figure 1, below, attempts to summarize the thought process for this MPD process; it highlights initial overall project conception and areas for exploration.

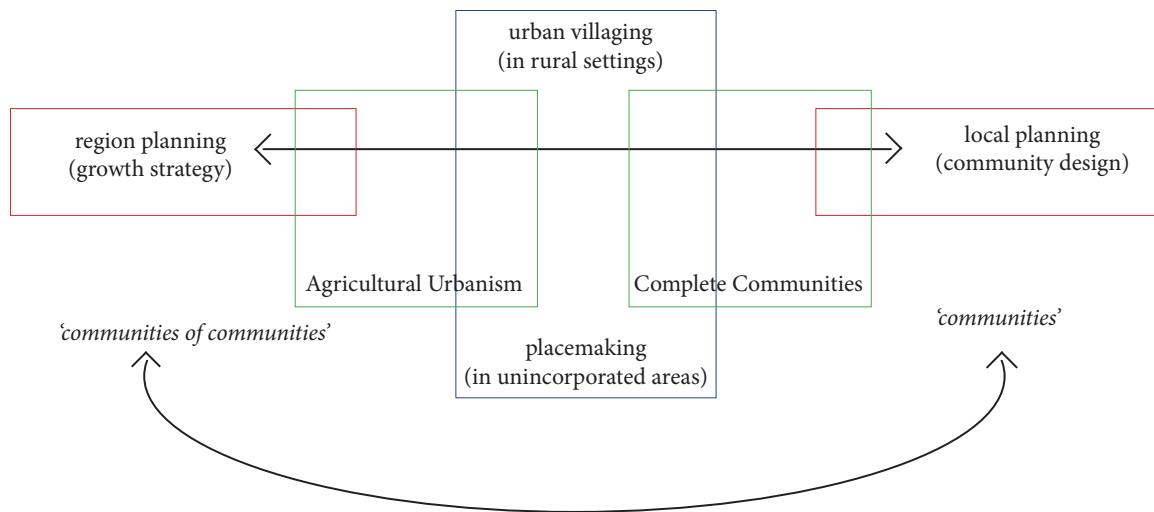


Figure 1. Conceptual Structure of the MDP

1.6 Biases, Limitations and Assumptions

Having previously interned as a planning student with the Regional District of Nanaimo on an inventory project relating to rural village centres, I already had some potentially relevant first-hand experience. While obviously interested in further capitalizing on this experience, it was acknowledged that I would have to be careful not to let this previous positive experience unduly bias this MDP project. Also, having worked in planning-related roles in the south/central Vancouver Island area (the general area where the case-study for this MDP is situated), I appreciated that I could not rely simply on pre-established professional relationships, but needed to actively seek a range of professional input appropriate for this project. Further, being from a small town, I had a particular interest in the rural setting; this is where my heart resides (and where I see myself settling one day). Thus, this MDP has been pursued not only to provide more insight on the rural/regional planning context, but also to reflect my personal interest in a major way.

Research has been conducted in the form of interviews with professional planners and via official documents in the public domain. It is recognized that there could be other, different, perspectives on the subject matter, from those in other professions, or from elected officials, for example. There may also be other literature, such as *grey* literature, not fully in the public domain, that might have informed this project, but which may have been missed on this occasion because of other emphases.

1.7 Structure of the Major Degree Project

This MDP is structured around a pursuit of responses to the previously-stated research questions, and the perceived underlying research problems. It is divided into six main chapters.

Chapter 1 has provided an introduction to the project and outlines the intended scope, focus, research questions, anticipated significance, and potential biases and limitations.

Chapter 2 features an exploratory review of relevant existing literature in three main topic areas, reflecting the main research questions and related research problem perceptions. It also briefly considers other regional district precedents and provides a brief background of the main case study context — the Regional District of Nanaimo and its RVC policies.

Chapter 3 outlines the research strategy employed — case study method, its applicability, and its appropriateness. The tactics, or methods, employed to execute this strategy include a mix of targeted literature review, comparable precedents consideration, and key informant semi-structured interviews.

Chapter 4 focuses on the case under scrutiny, examining, in particular, the Regional District of Nanaimo's RVC policies in the context of the research questions and underlying research problems. Although only a single case, it has the potential to be instructive in relation to other regional districts facing similar circumstances. There is, therefore, an interest here in articulating what may be learned from this case that might have wider significance.

Chapter 5 reports the results and outlines the findings from the interviews in relation to the research questions. It revisits the initial perceptions of the underlying research problems and offers some reconsideration in light of the research findings.

Chapter 6 features conclusions from a synthesis of the findings from the case study, the targeted literature review, and the interviews.

Chapter 7 offers an overview of the project. It also discusses implications for the planning profession and the education of planners. This chapter includes possible improvements on how such a project might be better conducted in the future. In line with the practicum framing of this project, this chapter consolidates appropriate learning for transference to regional planners (and community designers) working in rural settings, for their consideration, with a view to advancing their professional practice when operating in such settings.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter discusses regional planning and community design in the rural realm. The first section provides general background. This is followed by a consideration of literature looking at rural areas in urbanizing regions, helping to define *rural* in the regional planning context. The third section offers a discussion surrounding placemaking and village centres in a community design context. This is followed by an exploration of the conceptualization of Complete Communities [CC] and Agricultural Urbanism [AU], specifically, and their integration in the two previous discussed contexts — regional planning and community design. The chapter closes with a discussion of the case study, the Regional District of Nanaimo [RDN], and other precedent settings.

2.1 Background

As urban centres expand into their rural surroundings, urban-rural interfaces become more pronounced. As urban-oriented policies are increasingly being applied in rural settings, there is a need to better understand the changing rural landscape. Rural areas tend to be more spread out, have a smaller population base, and feature highly localized, distinct issues (Caldwell, 2010, p. 115-116). Rural demographers who have investigated the rural context have noted that rural places have “different characteristics that are typically a direct result of rurality”, compared to their urban counterparts (Bollman & Reimer, 2009, p. 132). While rural communities might exude broadly similar characteristics, they observe that “no two rural communities are the same” (Bollman &

Reimer, 2009, p. 140). This nuancing of *rural*, and the contrast with *urban*, is considered from various perspectives in this project: urban growth containment in rural areas, rural/regional placemaking, Complete Communities in rural-region settings, and Agricultural Urbanism along an urban-rural transect. This creates the basis for a broader situational understanding — of unincorporated rural areas, near expanding urban areas, in the wider regional planning context.

To generate this enhanced understanding, three main bodies of literature have been examined. Their interrelationships have helped to frame the empirical research represented by the case study and interviews (discussed in Chapters 3 and 4). The three main bodies of literature examined — with their defining/delimiting perspectives - are:

Regional Planning - Respecting the Rural Realm in an Urbanizing Region: Unincorporated Areas on the Fringes of Expanding Urban Centres.

Community Design - Strategising Growth Containment at the Urban-Rural Interface: Making Places and Urban Villaging.

Integrating Regional Planning and Community Design - The Place of Complete Communities and Agricultural Urbanism in Rural Settings: Where Regional Planning Meets Community Design.

These are considered in turn in the next three sections.

2.2 Respecting the Rural Realm in an Urbanizing Region: Unincorporated Areas on the Fringes of Expanding Regional Centres

This focuses on the *Regional Planning* context. Within this context are many different ways by which *rural* is interpreted, defined, and respected. For example, the term rural can be associated with organic lifestyles, community-driven initiatives, safety, and calmness (Rye, 2006, p. 410-411). The majority of Canadians live in cities and, in some cases it is apparent “that rural areas are thought of primarily as hinterlands for the

city to serve and dominate” (Coleman, 1977, p. 10). Similarly, the relationship between the city and its rural neighbours is often “epitomized in the notion of the ‘City’s Countryside’” (Bryant et al., 1982, cited in Bryant & Marois, 2010, p. 337). Rural places are changing: “rural areas are no longer dominated by agriculture and their composition increasingly mirrors that of economies in more urban areas” (Bosworth, 2010, p. 966). For some, rural areas are becoming the “most complex and interesting places” (Halseth, 2010, p. 64).

One way to define and interpret *rural* is in comparison to *urban*. Statistics Canada recently characterized *urban* via three categories: small, medium, and large urban population centres. A small urban centre, by definition, has a population of at least 1000 with a density of 400 (or more) people per square kilometer (Statistics Canada, 2011, February 3). Any statistical unit that does not numerically meet the latter criteria is considered to be rural. Statistics Canada also uses the term *rural and small town* to describe general rural areas **outside** designated Census Metropolitan Areas (CMA). To be categorized as a CMA there must be a minimum population of at least 100,000; of which 50,000 (or more) must live in the urban core (Statistics Canada, 2010). Much of the rural in the ‘rural and small town’ category in BC Regional District settings features unincorporated rural areas (although some of these rural areas may in fact be incorporated in a form of municipality, such as a Municipal District). However, perhaps the most challenging ‘rural’ settings in BC are those **within** a designated Census Metropolitan Area, usually in the shadow of a ‘large urban centre’ (rather than a ‘rural and small town’ context). The applicable ‘rural’ setting for this project is one within a

‘soon-to-be’ CMA — centred on the City of Nanaimo, but a setting that nevertheless features **unincorporated** rural (electoral) areas of the Regional District of Nanaimo.

Forms of local government in BC include municipalities (and their councils) and regional districts (and their boards). Municipalities are an incorporated form of local government, whereas regional districts are not. An unincorporated community/area can choose to apply for incorporation — and may wish to do so as a perceived benefit of incorporation is community-based decision-making power. Incorporated (municipal) governments have approving authority for subdivisions, more control over local roads, and greater financial control. However, in a non-urban context (such as the District of Lantzville discussed in Chapters 4 and 6) an incorporated local government may mean higher taxes (usually associated with more services, and/or a higher level of service). In the British Columbia context, “unincorporated areas are defined as land beyond the boundaries of municipal governments” (Meligrana, 2003, p. 2).

The RDN is largely characterized by its vast unincorporated areas — organized into electoral districts, prompting a range of considerations around the definition of *rural*. With an urban core population of greater than 10,000, the RDN (as a whole) is considered to be part of a Census Agglomeration (CA) with multiple Census Subdivisions within the agglomeration (Statistics Canada, 2012). Dispersed throughout the Nanaimo CA are the RGS-designated Rural Village Centres [RVCs] (see figure 3), all situated in electoral district settings.

The RVCs generally offer/host some services, but nothing comparable in scope to the services offered in the nearby municipally-incorporated urban centre — the City of Nanaimo (Summary Table of RVC Characteristics, Appendix 1b). Some of the RVCs

(Bowser, Cassidy, Cedar, Coombs, Errington, Extension, Hilliers, Qualicum Bay, and Dunsmuir) are noted by Statistics Canada as *designated place(s)* (DPL). Statistics Canada, in conjunction with the province, identifies a DPL as “a small community that does not meet the criteria used to define municipalities or population centres (areas with a population of at least 1,000 and no fewer than 400 persons per square kilometers)” (Statistics Canada, 2012b). By identifying an RVC as a designated place, there is greater ability to source particular data for these unincorporated rural areas - such as demographic and economic-based information. At present the RDN’s RVCs — that are also noted as a Statistics Canada DPL — do **not** share the same boundaries. In most cases the DPL area extends beyond the RGS-designated boundaries of the RVCs. In the future it is possible that either RVC or DPL boundaries could be adjusted to better align, and to optimize associated synergies; further research would be needed to more fully understand the ramifications and potential benefits of this alignment.

In Statistics Canada terms the RDN RVCs have a population of less than 1000, are *predominantly rural*, and range in dwelling unit density from 0.5 to 4.1 dwelling units per hectare (Regional District of Nanaimo [RDN], 2012). The majority of the RVCs have a population density of approximately three hundred residents per square kilometer; there are a few that are significantly higher, and a few that are significantly lower, (no RVC has a population greater than 1000, leaving them short of the smallest *urban* category).¹

Statistics Canada further defines rural by *predominance*, clarifying that a ‘predominantly rural’ area is where more than 50 percent of the population lives in a rural community with a population density of less than 150 people per square kilometer

¹ This has been determined by: population = average household size X number of dwelling units; then dividing the area of each RVC by approximate population

(Statistics Canada, 2009). *Predominantly rural* is further categorized into: i) *rural metro-adjacent* (rural areas next to urban areas), ii) *rural non-metro-adjacent* (rural areas not next to urban areas), and iii) *rural northern* (in BC these are mostly areas above the 54th parallel, making the category inapplicable in the current study context). This helps to address the important matter for this project of proximity to urban and regional centres (Statistics Canada, 2009). All of the RDN RVCs may be regarded as 'predominantly rural', and further classified as 'rural metro-adjacent'. This is the context that has been observed when reviewing the literature.

Similarly, Statistics Canada recognizes that proximity to metropolitan areas influences rural areas, and has thus adopted a category, *metropolitan influence zone* (MIZ). As the RDN is located in the Census Agglomeration of Nanaimo, there is a high degree of integration and influence — socially, economically, politically — between the City of Nanaimo and its rural hinterland or periphery. Establishing MIZ rankings allows for quantification of the percentage of the population commuting to an urban area to work (strong = >30 percent population, moderate = 5-29 percent, weak <5 percent). The rural areas of the RDN surrounding and including the RVCs are considered to have a **strong** MIZ (Statistics Canada, 2008). Places with a strong MIZ tend to have “excellent development opportunities” and their residents can easily commute to an urban centre (Reimer & Bollman, 2010, p. 23). As indicated earlier, the RDN RVCs would be considered *rural metro adjacent* as they are located in unincorporated electoral areas bordering the City of Nanaimo (or neighbouring municipalities) with many of their residents traveling to the municipalities to work, and/or for other more-than-basic needs. Figures 2 and 3 below identify the census agglomeration area, as well as highlight rural

fringe areas and electoral areas; these are the areas of most interest for this project. Planning here, at the “rural-urban fringe, has posed long-standing challenges”(Meligrana, 2003, p. 119). Appendix 1 offers greater map detail on the RDN’s RVCs.

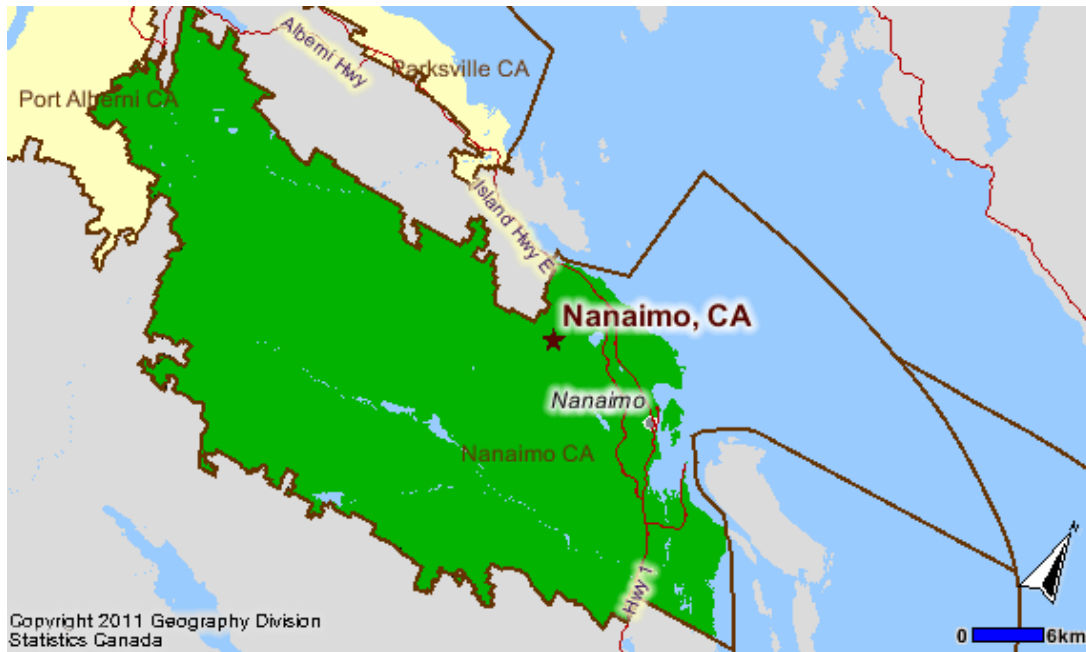


Figure 2. The Nanaimo Census Agglomeration area
<https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/as-sa/fogs-spg/Facts-cma-eng.cfm?Lang=Eng&TAB=1&GK=CMA&GC=938>

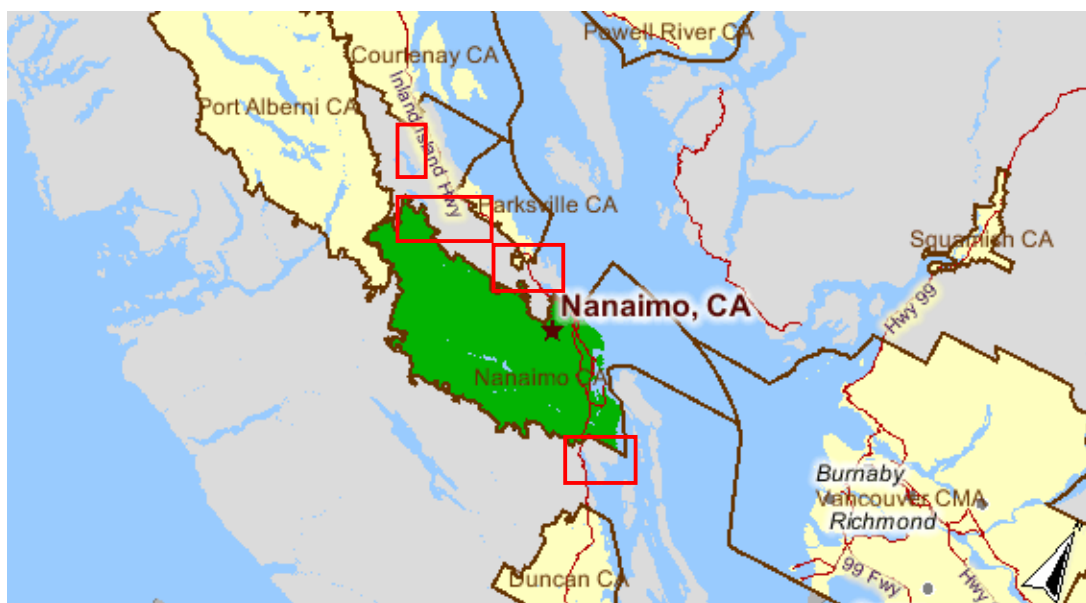


Figure 3. The red boxes in the above map highlight the general locations of the RVCs in association with the Census Agglomeration of Nanaimo

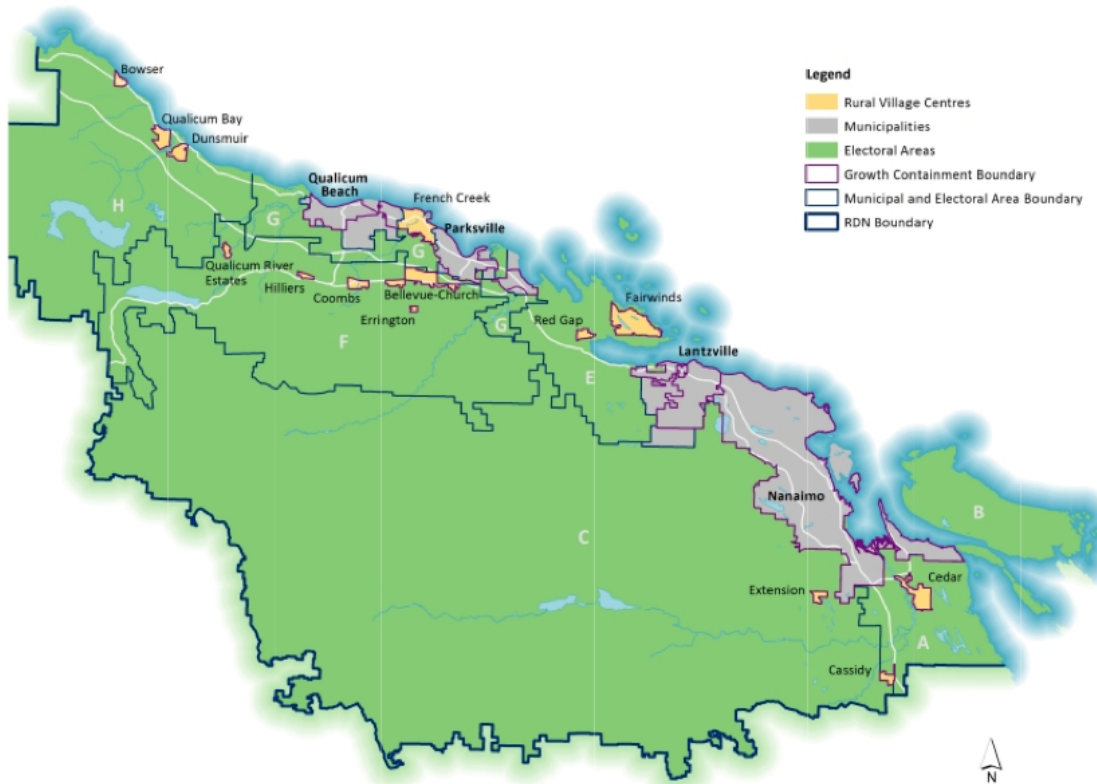


Figure 4. The above map shows the Regional District of Nanaimo. Highlighted in yellow are the locations of the designated RVCs

Figure 2 highlights an ‘inner’ urban fringe area surrounding the CA of Nanaimo, as well as an outer ‘rural fringe’ area. Within the CA are the primary urban core areas (City of Nanaimo), certain ‘designated places’ such as Lantzville (an incorporated municipality) which are not RVCs, Indian Reservations and ‘rural fringe’ areas. Figure 3 highlights the general location of the RVCs within the Census Agglomeration of Nanaimo. Figure 4, from the RGS, highlights the particular locations of the RVCs. Further information on each RVC can be found in Appendix 1.

Perhaps reflecting on such intricacies, complexities, and subtleties, Kevin Lynch (1984), in his essay *A Place Utopia* (on the theme of an urban countryside), observed that “this new muddled landscape [between urban and rural] contrasts with the extensive monocultures of the past” (p. 301). Alice Coleman, an earlier observer with rural and

environmental planning sympathies, offers an interesting interpretation of the implications of these changes: “city-centre planning is beginning to give place to a more integrated approach” (Coleman, 1977, p. 11). Coleman advanced the view of a more interdependent relationship, arguing that the previous “opposed views of rural or urban supremacy are both mistaken.” She suggested that these environments need to be viewed as “symbiotically interdependent” (Coleman, 1977). This mirrors the current hunch for this project, of a symbiotically interdependent relationship between regional planning and community design that needs to be better reflected in practice.

This may also be the place for some discussion surrounding ‘hybridization’ of landscapes, and the integration of diverse realities of rural and urban - through relationships with each other, and with place (Quayle et al., 1997). When considered in urban-rural terms, this symbiotically interdependent relationship is literally grounded in where the urban and the rural meet.

For Coleman, this is a unique symbiosis, neither urban nor rural, but *rurban*. According to Coleman, the rurban fringe “is the zone of interpenetration of town and country that has been invalidated as a rural environment, without being validated as an urban environment” (1977, p. 25). As urban areas expand into unincorporated rural areas, what most merits planning and design attention? Halseth offers that “it is in these spaces that the transformation of lands, communities and economies can be most dramatic” (2010, p. 64). These areas, such as those occupied by the RDN’s RVCs, may no longer be purely or predominantly rural, but not yet purely or predominantly urban. But is there still a place, utopian or otherwise, for such underlying ‘purity’ to be privileged — one way or the other? Perhaps we need new concepts, such as a “middle landscape” (Daniels,

1999), or rural fringe (Coleman, 1977, p. 10) as a new type of rural-urban environment, or urban countryside (Lynch, 1984, p. 294). New planning and design approaches might also help, such as the placemaking advanced here, especially where this incorporates ‘urban-village-making’ or adaptations of other current movements, such as Complete Communities or Agricultural Urbanism. These are featured in the following literature review sections.

2.3 Strategising Growth Containment at the Urban-Rural Interface: Making Places and Urban Villaging

This section focuses on the Community Design context, as a counterbalance to the previous Regional Planning focus, but a context that has received much less direct consideration. By way of possible explanation, it may be observed that the regional planning context for this project is very much dominated by regional growth strategising at a regional district level. This mostly manifests in a management (rather than planning) disposition, which is associated with an interest in both facilitating growth and, containing (as well as influencing its distribution across the region) it. The RVC policy in the RDN’s growth strategy may be interpreted as primarily a growth containment initiative, directing and distributing urban-generated growth into designated rural area centres. In these contexts, this project proposes that the general management orientation needs to be complemented by a strong intricate community design effort, especially in areas that are unincorporated.

The community design being advocated is not equivalent to (nor interchangeable with) ‘local planning’ (as in locality-scale regional planning) but it may be considered complementary to ‘local planning’ where initiatives are fine-grained, community-driven

and community-based (rather than coarse-grained, RD-driven and sub-region/locality-based). It is contended here that a ‘planning-as-placemaking’ approach is capable of bridging both.

Unincorporated areas — where the RDN’s RVCs are located - are “ripe with institutional fragmentation”, which can result in diverse approaches to growth management (Meligrana, 2003, p. 120). Here, “place matters, but only in a partial context” (Townsend & Hungerford, 2010, p. 284). The associated planning needs to be much more sensitive to unique community contexts (such as ‘planning as placemaking’), and needs to be up for handling seemingly contradictory influences (such as ‘*urban villaging*’).

In regards to literature on growth management policies and practices, there are signs of a “lack of attention paid to rural communities” (Crowe, 2011, p. 222). Demographics, economic development, and political structures impact urban and rural areas, as well as all areas in between (Bryant & Marois, 2010, p. 339-40). Repeatedly it seems, the “rural interest must compete for attention in the public policy agenda” (Greenwood, 2010, p. 90). While urban centres and urban-centred regions have typically employed growth management policies, regardless of rate of growth (Leo, 2006), the impact of these policies in rural settings is heavily influenced by the current local and regional agenda in the form of policy documents, regulations and politics (Perkins, 2006). These can have a strong affect (negatively and positively) on rural business, economics, and development (Crowe, 2011).

In Canada, there has been an “influx of urbanites into the rural-urban fringe” (Townsend & Hungerford, 2010, p. 250). With regards to the rural-urban interface

context, some literature suggests that adoption of growth management policies may be popular due to the growth of non-urban areas near urban centres (Platt, 2004). In these places, where urban meets rural, the “transformation of lands, communities and economies can be most dramatic” (Halseth, 2010, p. 64). The literature further suggests that “rural areas are no longer dominated by agriculture” and “their composition increasingly mirrors that of economies in more urban areas” (Bosworth, 2010, p. 966). This reasoning may help to explain why growth containment policies, and de facto forms of urban village concepts, are being applied and enacted in non-urban areas (Biddulph et al., 2003).

The RDN RVC policies could in fact be represented as a demonstration of this (RDN, 2011, p. 26 & 29). If such policies and concepts are to be more formally applied in predominantly rural settings, it is important to realize that each rural area reflects its own discrete and specific characteristics. Just because a place is rural does not mean all rural places are similar, nor should they be treated as such. As “rural local governments work very closely with their communities” (Douglas & Annis, 2010, p. 298), there may a case for working with multiple rural places within a given region. In each rural place, “the definition of community differs” as “individuals ascribe their own meanings to communities” (Townsend & Hungerford, 2010, p. 273). A community design approach, where community-focused planning prevails, directly responds to this situation, but may struggle for a foothold where regional planning is prioritized, and operationalized primarily from an urban, or urban-privileging, perspective.

Growth containment is typically managed on a regional scale and, occasionally, on an even broader scale, such as state- (or province-) wide (Pendall & Martin, 2002). When

considering growth containment regionally, subject landscapes can vary greatly: “parts of a region are secluded, while other lands, particularly the centres, are highly accessible” (Lynch, 1984, p. 303). For instance, in the context of the RDN at the present time there are thirteen designated rural village centres, most of which are illustrated in Appendix 1a. While the same policies surrounding regional land use regulation and growth strategising allow for creation of these RVCs, each designated centre is characteristically unique. This thought parallels Quayle and Driessen van der Lieck’s suggestion that a community is best planned and designed “to be never finished, but always complete” (1997, p. 106). Some of the RVCs are industry-focused, some are settlement-focused; they all have varying levels of access in terms of major transportation routes and modes. Each rural village centre is in effect its own ‘community’, within the broader RDN ‘community of communities’. Each region, as well as each area within a given region, manifests its own unique characteristics (Bollman & Reimer, 2009).

Shibley, Schneekloth and Hovey (2003) suggest that “regions have identity; they have an image” which is composed of natural features, economic structure, and significant events (p. 29). It is a combination of such factors that creates the possibility of a region being conceived as a place, and regional planning being conceived as placemaking on a grand scale (bio-regional). In addition, the discrete places within the region help confer an overall sense of the region as ‘a community of communities’. Shibley, Schneekloth and Hovey (2003) further suggest that “the public realm at a regional scale, with multiple cities and large rural areas, is too big to grasp all at once as a concrete reality” and that “stories and images are necessary to hold it together” (p. 40). Each story told is “an opaque admixture of historic fact and cultural interpretation” (p. 30). Storytelling, as well

as visual, and imaginative, practices are also applicable in local, rural contexts — perhaps even more so than at a regional scale.

Placemaking is essentially the pursuit, as an almost primal human practice, of “collective aims that are relational, situational, and inclusive” (Schneekloth & Shibley, 2000, p. 133). Le Guin argues for an intuitive approach to placemaking: “imagination is, after all, an intensively practical activity” (1989, p. 288). Such imagination can help to transpose the normally rural connotation of a village into a more urban or urbanizing setting — the concept of an urban village (Sucher, 1995, 2003, see Table 1) — especially with community design in play to balance the regional planning influences.

Table 1. Words associated with <i>urban</i> and <i>village</i> (Adapted from Sucher, 1995, p.8)	
Urban	Hustle-bustle, liberty, lonely, hostile, far away, strangers, possibilities, growth, artificial, complex, large, skyscraper, liberal, anonymous
Village	Tranquility, structure, together, friendly, close by, kindred, limits, stasis, natural, simple, small, cottage, conservative, familiar

The *urban village* concept is at present typically applied in a city-like setting and is characterized by mid-to-high-density development, mixed-used zoning, transit options, open public spaces, and pedestrian-focused design. This concept, claimed to have been formally coined by the Urban Villages Group in the UK (Aldous, 1992), attempts to create a discrete urban area in which people can work, play, live, and have their daily necessities met (a miniature ‘complete community’ of sorts). One critique of the urban village concept is that simply designating an area as an urban village does not automatically create a community, as a community is more than a defined geographical area (Biddulph et al., 2003, p. 191). Other critiques suggest that the urban village concept “tends to generate sameness” and actively creates and produces marginalization (Barnes et al., 2006, p. 338-9). The urban village concept is also considered “quite a different

approach” when it comes to possible adoption “by conventional developers and investors” (Rodwell, 1992, p. 632). All of this indicates the need for care when translating the ‘urban village’ concept from its mostly highly urban precedents, to much more rural contexts (where a ‘village’ has traditionally represented the first development of the ‘urban’ in rural settings — so much so that it did not require ‘qualifying’ as rural).

While Barnes et al. (2006) offer that the “seductiveness of the urban village concept relies upon appealing to the nostalgia for an ideal community” (p. 351), the application/translation of the ‘urban village’ concept in rural contexts can be expected to require new approaches (such as a rural-region form of placemaking) as well as new framings (such as Agricultural Urbansim), but it may also be associated with an adaptation of other current notions, such as Complete Communities. At the very least, it will have to be situated within a more concerted effort to better integrate regional planning and community design. These considerations are very much in play in this project.

2.4 The Place of Complete Communities and Agricultural Urbanism in Rural Settings: Where Regional Planning Meets Community Design.

This section focuses on *integrating* Regional Planning and Community Design, potentially through a combined application of Complete Communities and Agricultural Urbanism. Imagine a question-mark at the end of the section title; it conveys a premise of sorts, a working hypothesis underlying this project.

The new urbanist concept of Complete Communities has attained prominence recently through attempts to combat urban sprawl. By definition, a complete community:

...allows for people of all ages and abilities to safely and conveniently meet their daily needs through a diverse mix of food distribution options, local and public services, housing choices, employment opportunities, open areas and recreational spaces, and an efficient public transportation system, all of which are supported by the necessary infrastructure to accommodate a wide variety of lifestyle choices. Complete Communities encourage meaningful community participation in all relevant aspects of planning and supports sustainable development that is beneficial to the natural environment and the health of society as a whole. (Donaldson, et al., 2010, p. 30)

As a Complete Communities approach is sometimes considered a more sustainable one, compared to current development practices (Arendt, 1999, p. 93), there has been a recent uptick in the integration of this approach into growth management plans and community plans, resulting in greater policy adoption at the local government level. While this concept may, on the surface, appear to be more applicable in urban areas, the current project seeks to examine its relevance in rural settings, such as the rural village centres at the heart of the RDN's growth strategy for unincorporated rural areas.

It has been suggested that a community is best planned and designed “to be never finished, but always complete” (Quayle, et al., 1997, p. 106). These particular authors also work in the *hybrid landscape* context that seems particularly apt for the current project, although they caution: “the making of hybrid landscapes may not be easy because it challenges established notions” (Quayle et al., 1997, p. 106). Might this convention-challenging insight and context actually enhance strategising around the Complete Communities concept and, if so, how might this best be accomplished? In particular, how might it be interwoven with other approaches, such as placemaking, *urban* village-making (in *rural* settings), Agricultural Urbanism, and community design?

Community design — where planners position themselves more as aspiring architects of community, in a community-privileging context — is gathering support

from academics and practitioners (Francis, 1983). This is an approach that “includes small town conservation, historic preservation, downtown economic revitalization, management of neighborhood change, landscape and building assessment, use of appropriate technology and alternative energy sources, local landscape development and urban farming, and shaping of urban policy” (Francis, 1983, p. 14). Francis goes on to say that the community design approach is about process and product and “is typically small scale, local, and inclusive of user needs” (p. 15); furthermore, through the community design approach, “there is not a ‘right’ way to design but only ‘appropriate’ approaches” to finding solutions and solving problems (p. 19).

Community design is a community-based (community being more than ‘locality’) and community-privileging approach — a polar opposite to the much more common regional, and region-privileging, approach (which at best sees ‘localities’, local to the region — rather than communities). Sheri Blake suggests that placemaking contributes to community design (2003). She further suggests there is a “responsibility to understand that communities are complex social systems and that physical design is only part of an integrated solution” (p. 411-1). Quayle and Driessen van der Lieck (1997) infer that a community, especially in a rural context, emerges as a hybrid landscape of physicality, emotionality, and relationships, representing a “mirror of the people who live in the neighbourhood” (p. 106). They further note: “individual relationship with the landscape helps to create a community” (p. 99). These ideas merit consideration when attempting to situate community design in a regional planning context. While this type of planning “takes time and co-operation,” Hornel and Walker (2003) offer that “this investment will pay off” (p. 26).

As noted earlier, Agricultural Urbanism (AU) is a policy framework aimed at integration of food systems across many scales (de la Salle & Holland, 2010, p. 240). AU may offer an approach that bridges community design and regional planning. Merging these polarities, through the necessity of food security, offers a chance to “stimulate thinking around how to fuse planning and design” at the local and regional scale (de la Salle & Holland, 2010, p. 12). AU views regions as a continuum — rural-intra-urban, rather than rural or urban. This approach allows for “multiple scales of agriculture: from window boxes and roof gardens; to public greens and farms” to be integrated into all types of places, urban or rural (Roehr & Kunigk, 2009, p. 62-64).

<i>Table 2. 10 Principles of Agricultural Urbanism</i> (de la Salle & Holland, 2010, p.31-32)	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take an integrated, food-and-agriculture systems perspective • Create a rich experience of food and agriculture • Build the food and agriculture economy • Increase access to food • Educate about food • Manage to support sustainable food systems • Provide food and habitat for other species • Organize for food • Construct sustainable infrastructure for food and agriculture • Bring food and agriculture into the full suite of climate change solutions

AU does not apply to only urban or only rural spaces, but rather to all places, as principles can be actualized at the regional scale or at the neighbourhood level (de la Salle & Holland, 2010, p. 200-201). While it is noted that urban, rural, and areas between the urban-rural “require different planning approaches” (Drescher, 2001, p. 344), AU seeks to draw out similarities amongst these different approaches, demonstrating that a similar policy framework can work across regions, regardless of spatial scale. AU evolved from the realization that only ‘urban agriculture’ tended to be in view — the rest of the urban and regional food system “was all too often missed” (de la Salle & Holland, 2010, p. 31). Thus, creating principles and policy potential for urban, peri-

urban, suburban, and rural (and all places in-between), is the basis of AU.

Sharing some similarities with AU is New Ruralism. The New Ruralism approach is “built on twenty years of reform in food, agriculture and land use planning” (Kraus, 2006, p. 27) and suggests “a holistic approach that integrates a wide range of goals for public health, conservation, economic development, housing agricultural productivity and more” (p.29). Kraus (2006) argues that this holistic integrative approach is key to rural and urban places reflecting regional values (p. 29), and further implies that New Ruralism can stimulate greater “urban-rural connectivity ... [and] multi-faceted exchange” (p. 28). This parallels the “flexible multi-layered brainstorming approaches” (Roehr & Kunigk, 2009, p. 67) that are required to weave AU into rural-intra-urban planning practices.

Both New Ruralism and AU suggest that evolving current perceptions and providing appropriate information are key (Roehr & Kunigk, 2009; de la Salle & Holland, 2010). Roehr and Kunigk (2009) suggest that “City Planners need to enable the integrative planning” by providing administrative, financial, and personnel support (p. 67).

Perhaps this (the New Ruralism) is another way by which planning professionals can help weave AU into current planning practice. Especially for those rural planners who find it difficult to accept the notion of ‘Agricultural Urbanism’ (a contradiction in terms, seeming to privilege ‘the urban’ — even though ‘agricultural’ is the more privileged qualifier) the New Ruralism may be a more congenial initial framing. Agricultural Urbanism becomes accessible in conjunction with ‘both/and’, rather than ‘either/or’ thinking — a key mindset shift for making sense of AU in the context of this project.

AU explores how the related policy framework is integrated across varying scales. In this respect it mirrors the transect approach discussed by Duany and Talen (2002). They

describe the scientific transect method, “a geographical cross-section of a region used to reveal a sequence of environments,” (p. 246) (Figure 5) and its adaptation as the Rural-to-Urban Transect (referred to in short hand as the Transect), for use in planning. This approach allows for varying habitats to be identified, based upon “their level and intensity of urban character, a continuum that ranges from rural to urban” (Duany & Talen, 2002, p. 246). It provides an alternative to a *one or other* approach (that is reflective of viewing rural and urban in *either/or* terms), versus viewing rural and urban in *both/and* terms, which is the operative perspective for this project.

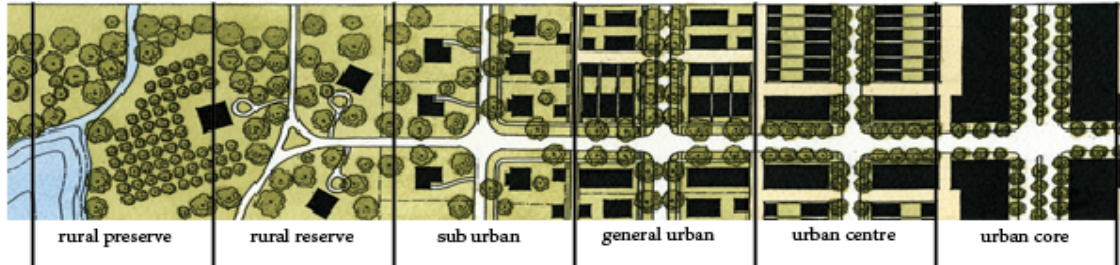


Figure 5. Transect Approach: Adapted from Duany & Talen, 2002 and from <http://dpzarchitects.com/Thought/Transect>

With a transect approach there is an effort to eliminate the “urbanizing of the rural” and the “ruralizing of the urban” (Duany & Talen, 2002, p. 247) since place is conceived in ecologically-based continuum terms. The transect is a continuum of land use, comprising six zones: rural preserve, rural reserve, sub-urban, general urban, urban centre, and urban core (Duany & Talen, 2002, p. 248). The rural is not the *other* to urban; in the transect approach the rural is part of a regionally-integrated system. While this approach still acknowledges some urban and rural differentiation, it is argued that considering a place in transect terms allows for “the core principle of good urban form to be in a range of human habitats” (Duany & Talen, p. 247) in both urban and rural contexts — in a sense, a bridging of regional and local/communal.

2.5 Case Study: The Regional District of Nanaimo

The Regional District of Nanaimo [RDN] furnishes the main case study context for this project. One of the first Regional Districts in British Columbia to adopt a Regional Growth Strategy [RGS] (1996), the RDN's most recent RGS update (2011) offers an opportunity to reflect on theory in practice, especially as regards the rural 'growth-management-as-containment' approach, featuring RVCs. The case also furnishes an actual example of how large urban centres (the City of Nanaimo in this case) advance upon their rural neighbours, how urban-rural divides become blurred, and how this essentially urban-centric policy is applied in rural settings that value their rurality. The RDN's RVC policy may be improved by incorporating aspects of Complete Communities and Agricultural Urbanism while better integrating placemaking approaches. The RDN RGS attempts to address concerns about sprawl and favours a regional approach to well-planned development patterns. A key focus of the recently-adopted RDN RGS document is "creating complete, compact communities" and "protecting resource lands and open space — including agricultural and forestry lands" (Regional District of Nanaimo [RDN], 2011, p. 3). The RGS establishes growth containment boundaries to manage growth, as highlighted previously in Figure 3. In the incorporated municipal areas, these growth containment contexts are referred to as 'urban centres' but, in the unincorporated electoral areas, they are now referred to as 'rural village centres'. While the policies aim to promote a "diverse mix of land uses in RVCs... that allow people to live, work, play and learn within a walkable environment," this is not necessarily what is occurring in these areas in the RDN at present (RDN, 2012, p 3). It is acknowledged that there are some design considerations outlined in various

development permits applicable to some of the RVCs; however, these tend to be limited, and localized, to very specific areas.

Various background documents are available, including previous regional growth strategies (RDN, 2003; RDN, 1997), population projections (Urban Futures, 2007) and various background reports (RDN, 2012; City Spaces, 2009). These documents offer a clear picture of the history of growth management in the area, and the necessity for continued growth management into the foreseeable future.

The case study of this regional district may provide guidance for other regional districts in similar situations, such as those discussed below in the possible precedents section. Outcomes achieved and challenges encountered via this case study may also assist local governments within regional districts in relation to future policy development, programming, planning and/or regulation.

2.6 Precedents and Potentials

In British Columbia there are twenty-seven regional districts and, of these, ten currently have adopted, or are in the process of adopting, a regional growth strategy (RGS). The districts with an RGS are predominantly in the high growth regions of the province (Ministry of Community, Sport and Culture Development, 2012).

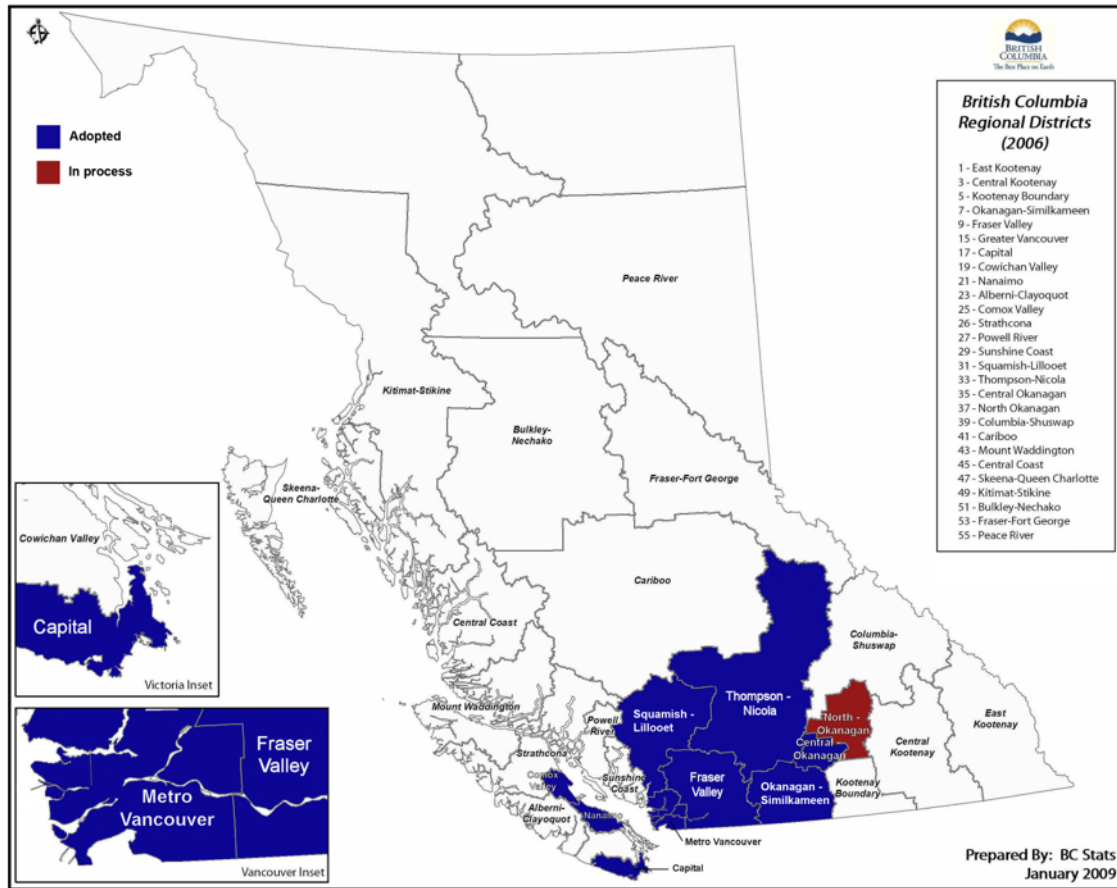


Figure 6. Regional Districts with Regional Growth Strategies

The precedents (and future potential study areas) examined in this project include the following Regional Districts: Comox Valley, North Okanagan, Central Okanagan, and Okanagan-Similkameen (also referred to as South Okanagan). All have large expanses of significantly populated rural unincorporated areas (as well as incorporated areas, such as towns or municipalities), and at least one larger urban centre. All precedents share some similarities with the Regional District of Nanaimo and offer an opportunity to inter-regional learning. Table 3 presents a summary of where people live (incorporated or unincorporated areas) within each Regional District setting discussed.

Table 3. Summary of case study and precedent areas - incorporated and unincorporated areas - by land area and population				
<i>Regional District</i>	<i>Incorporated Areas (ha)</i>	<i>Incorporated Areas Population</i>	<i>Unincorporated Areas (ha)</i>	<i>Unincorporated Areas Population</i>
<i>Nanaimo</i>	19,242	102,118	186,460	36,783
<i>Comox</i>	7,856	37,018	169,600	21,806
<i>North Okanagan</i>	45,989	59,174	744,210	18,130
<i>Central Okanagan</i>	150,509	150,509	246,520	11,767
<i>Okanagan-Similkameen</i>	14,752	56,112	1,086,990	23,363

Source: Adapted from local government statistics found at http://www.cscd.gov.bc.ca/lgd/infra/library/regional_stats11_summary.pdf

2.6.1 Vancouver Island

Comox Valley Regional District. This is the Regional District of Nanaimo’s geographical neighbour to the north. With a recently-adopted RGS (March 2011), this RD provides a snapshot of the current realities of growth strategising on central Vancouver Island.

The Comox Valley RGS identifies *core settlement areas* where the majority of growth is to be directed and contained. This largely encompasses *municipal areas* and *settlement nodes*. Municipal areas are incorporated areas and settlement nodes are planned settlement areas that have been established through existing local area plans. Their RGS also allows for growth in rural areas to a maximum of 10 percent of total growth for the CVRD (Comox Valley Regional District [CVRD], 2011). Collaborative regional and local planning for “directing growth and land use activities” is envisaged to shape long-term growth management (CVRD, 2011, p. 80). The Comox Valley RD RGS is “unique and specific to the circumstances within the Comox Valley” (CVRD, 2011, p. 81) and is intended to be adapted in the future in line with emerging trends, conditions, and realities.

2.6.2 Okanagan

The Central Okanagan Regional District is bounded by North Okanagan (to the north) and Okanagan-Similkameen (to the south). Together, this trio of regional districts extends from Central BC to the US border.

Regional District of the North Okanagan. The RDNO adopted its RGS in September 2011. With a current population of 83,000, there is a broad range of land uses, land interests, and landscapes in the area. It has incorporated a *rural protection boundary* into the RGS. Within this designated rural area, there is support for access to water/sewer services, and for greater densities of development, in contrast to more restrictive policy for the other type of rurally designated area known as *rural protection areas*. Lands *within* the rural protection boundary are the areas where rural growth is preferred. Lands designated rural protection areas, outside the boundary, are to be preserved for strictly agriculture uses, with rural residential development being restricted (Regional District of the North Okanagan [RDNO], 2011). Development occurring in rural protection areas is to be low density, on large lots, should not disrupt agricultural practices, and should not increase the overall density (RDNO, 2011, p. 14). Within the rural protection area, there will not be any local government support for water/sewer servicing; it appears these measures are intended to only encourage development which is “compatible with the rural character of the North Okanagan” (RDNO, 2011, p. 15). The RGS does designate *future growth areas*, most of which are contiguous with an existing growth area and in close proximity to land reserved by the Province of British Columbia for agriculture uses.

Regional District of Central Okanagan. Central Okanagan is in the process of reviewing its regional growth strategy. The previous RGS was adopted in June 2000 and directs growth towards fully-serviced existing settlement areas. With a current population of 185,000, this area is predicted to rapidly grow to a population of 266,000 by 2036 (Regional District of the Central Okanagan [RDCO], 2012, p. 6). The most recent RGS, adopted during the writing of this MDP in September 2012, focuses desired outcomes towards providing “a consistent and coordinated regional approach for growth management” (RDCO, 2012). The RDN context may provide a jumping off point for Central Okanagan for how to manage growth, especially in their rural areas.

Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen (South Okanagan). South Okanagan adopted its Regional Growth Strategy in April 2011. With a predicted population growth of 30,000 by 2031 (to approximately 108,000), this area is experiencing rapid growth. Their RGS has identified and established *rural growth areas*. These areas are where rural growth will be directed and where community water/sewer service provision will be supported. Policy for these areas will promote “compact urban form and protect the character of rural areas” (Regional District of the South Okanagan [RDSO], 2011, p. 17). A key element listed in the South Okanagan RGS is to “strengthen rural and urban community identity” (2001, p. 5). The RGS includes measures to protect and enhance rural areas, even allowing for some servicing and amenities in well-established rural centres (South Okanagan RGS, 2001, p. 7). Further, the document speaks to collaboration on any fringe area planning decisions, particularly those at key interfaces, where urban-rurban-rural intermingle.

The above-mentioned precedents represent situations similar to that encountered by the Regional District of Nanaimo. These Regional Districts — Comox, North Okanagan, Central Okanagan, and Okanagan-Similkameen — may furnish useful insights as they are all experiencing rapid growth, facing challenges posed by increased infrastructure demands, are being required to provide services for diversifying populations. Perhaps there is a need for a new type of local government in BC, “one that can bridge the needs of an environment that is neither rural nor urban” (Meligrana, 2003, p.138). The present project could be useful for grounding future research and extending the analysis of this particular case study of the RDN to the above-mentioned precedent contexts.

2.7 Chapter Summary

Thus far, the literature review suggests that there is heightened importance of the ‘in-between’ areas; the areas that are neither purely urban nor purely rural, but rather which involve an inter-mixing or inter-mingling of both. These areas (often unincorporated) in many ways may appear to reflect a community that is incorporated (i.e. as a municipality, with a local government of its own) — through levels of servicing, community governance approaches, and population trends; but this is only appearance (unless they actually incorporate — as has been the case with the District of Lantzville, a former RVC). These settings certainly merit being accorded increased importance and greater critical discernment by planners; there could be much to be learned — especially as regards planning and growth management at the urban/rural interface.

Placemaking appears to be key — acting as a bonding agent/process between different actions-cum-interventions, allowing similarities to be observed and valued, but also

appropriately highlighting differences. Placemaking may provide a forum to help mitigate competition between these centres, by providing each with a better understanding of how they ‘fit’ into the wider regional puzzle — the larger system of which they are also a part.

With Statistics Canada applying terminology such as ‘designated place’ (DPL) to these peri-urban/peri-rural — the in-between — this categorization may allow for better research in the future. The precedent settings also offer opportunities to further investigate the increased importance of peri-urban/peri-rural arenas. The DPL feature may facilitate better connection between the RDN RVC experiences (discussed in Chapter 4) and those in other areas — perhaps enabling more readily identity comparable experiences and possibilities.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH STRATEGY

Under the general umbrella of case study research strategy, three main research tactics have been employed: targeted literature review, a main case study with a complementary review of several comparable precedent contexts, and key informant semi-structured interviews. The primary empirical research involved the semi-structured key-informant interviews. Secondary research included the targeted literature review of relevant theory and the main case study analysis. The literature review also helped to determine potentially appropriate comparable precedents. Incorporating both primary and secondary research methods helped to generate more informative conclusions (Noonan, 1992, p. 9). The targeted literature review, the case study and precedents, and the key-informant interviews represented a form of triangulation, increasing the validity of the results.

Based in part on literature review findings, conventional land use planning does acknowledge the rural realm, but often seems to be focused on urban environments. Thus far, this MDP has attempted to better understand aspects of planning and design in rural settings — the *rural* in *regional*, and planning connected with design — specifically around growth management and the containment of such growth. This has often meant ‘containing’ urbanizing influences, and managing related tensions between urban and rural.

The challenge around discerning what *completeness* means in rural-regional settings has influenced consideration of how regional planning and community design are best linked. The research approach has created a space for interviewing a range of planners and has facilitated exploration beyond what was discovered through the literature. In particular this research has

enabled more discovery around how Complete Communities may play a role, as well as Agricultural Urbanism, and the linking contexts afforded by placemaking and villaging (or village-making).

The case study of the Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) grounded the inquiry; it provided contextualization of rural areas growth management, the application of rural-friendly urban forms in rural settings (villaging), and a venue for considering the relevance of Complete Communities and Agricultural Urbanism. It also facilitated discussions of how regional planning and community design are currently integrated, or may be better integrated, in the case of the RDN at least. The case study is further discussed in Chapter 4.

3.1 Targeted Literature Review

The literature review targeted three areas, focusing first on regional planning, then on community design, and finally on the potential for enhanced integration of regional planning and community design. The purpose of the literature review was to provide a theoretical framework and academic rigor to the study, which otherwise might have been dominated by the RDN case study. The latter became simply part of the means to exploring the larger ends reflected in the research questions. The literature review helped to link current (rural planning) practices to the theoretical context, particularly surrounding the topics of growth containment, placemaking, Complete Communities, and Agricultural Urbanism (AU). It also helped to create a broader understanding of the planning and design needs of unincorporated rural areas near expanding urban areas. The literature review has been used to inform the line of questioning in the interviews, to help organize and support the analysis of empirical interview data, and to inform the synthesis of outcomes and insights. It also aided in framing the main case study investigation.

3.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

The interview process featured a semi-structured format. Interviewees targeted included planners from a range of backgrounds, with experience of regional growth strategizing and growth management techniques on Vancouver Island (or the comparable precedents context in the Okanagan). Direct and/or indirect experiences with Regional Districts were also common among interviewees. In total, eleven key informants were interviewed with experiences ranging from local and provincial governments, to consulting and academia. For this project the semi-structured interview guide followed the same format for all participants, but left room for further exploration and questioning depending on responses offered. Working from the same questions for all interviewees allowed for multiple differing responses to the same (or similar) questions. A semi-structured method allowed for retrieval of data that had not been formally documented or recorded, and helped further contextualize the research through confidential, intimate one-on-one conversations (Gilchrist & Williams, 1999).

This personal approach allowed for more appropriate response results than a formal questionnaire, as there was a direct link between the interviewer and the interviewee (Austin, 1981). It also permitted a more natural conversational-style engagement and enabled adaptation and elaboration beyond the main questions, in response to what was gleaned in-the-moment from participant answers. Not only did the interviews help to fill gaps in existing literature, but they also helped to inform the case study synthesis by providing insider perspectives on the relationship, in practice, between community design and regional planning. The outcomes from the semi-structured interviews are summarized in Chapter 5.

There were seventeen questions provided to each participant, via email, prior to the interviews taking place (see Appendix 2). A visual context summary and statement of informed

consent were also provided at that time (see Appendix 3). Before commencing the interview, each participant initialed and signed a copy of a form of informed consent allowing digital audio recording to occur, and findings to be disseminated within this MDP document. Interviews were conducted over the phone, at a mutually-agreed upon time and were approximately one hour in length. Once all of the interviews were conducted and transcribed, an analysis of data occurred, via open coding, to determine main themes.

Individual interviews focused on gathering information to gain greater understanding of the rural context, growth containment in unincorporated areas, and rural placemaking. The interviews also provided an avenue to investigate hunches surrounding the place of Complete Communities and Agricultural Urbanism, as complementary theoretical and practical framings for better connecting regional planning and community design. The interviews helped to fill existing knowledge gaps.

3.3 Case Study Research Strategy

This project featured case study as the underlying research strategy. A case study of the Regional District of Nanaimo anchored and grounded the inquiry. It provided contextualization of rural growth management, the application of urban concepts in rural settings (urban villages/village centres) and offered a venue for consideration of the relevance of Complete Communities and Agricultural Urbanism. The underlying interest was how regional planning and community design are integrated, or might be better integrated, in the case of the RDN. Case study method, as an umbrella research strategy (Robson, 1993), provides a “closeness to real-life situations” and “multiple wealth of details” about the subject, situation, and experiences (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 223).

Case study as prime research strategy was applicable for this project as it focused on current realities, in a context of good access to key documents and informants (Robson, 1993). Also, a desired outcome was to provide theoretical generalizations to broaden the understanding surrounding the *rural* in a regional planning and community design context. Case study method has been prominent in social science research, and is expected to continue to be prominent into the future (Campbell, 1974). This research strategy provided an important foundation for this mainly qualitative study. To strengthen its validity, an extensive review of related literature was necessary (Lee, 1989), and was incorporated as Chapter 2 of this document.

As previously noted, the case anchoring the strategy was provided by the Regional District of Nanaimo and, specifically, considerations regarding its experience of growth containment strategizing in unincorporated rural areas (the rural village centres policies), the potential applicability of concepts such as Complete Communities and Agricultural Urbanism, and the opportunity to reflect on the integration of regional planning and community design. This afforded the opportunity to gain an intricate understanding of practices, policies, and strategies in a specific real-world context, with a particular interest in the rural dimension. Other potentially comparable precedents are also briefly discussed as one research tactic under the broader case study strategy. The Comox Valley Regional District, the Regional District of North Okanagan, the Central Okanagan Regional District, and the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen (South Okanagan) help to place the RDN experience in a comparative context.

CHAPTER 4

CASE STUDY: THE REGIONAL DISTRICT OF NANAIMO

A case study of the Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) has been employed to anchor and ground this inquiry. The RDN's policies on Rural Village Centres (RVCs) furnish the underlying interest for this case study. The policies offer a setting for considering the strategizing of growth containment (of urban-like development) in unincorporated rural areas. The setting enables a discussion of the potential applicability of concepts such as Complete Communities and Agricultural Urbanism, and the opportunity to reflect on the integration of regional planning and community design, through approaches such as placemaking. This chapter reports the results of studying this particular case for responses to the research questions, from the perspective of a real-world setting.

4.1 Regional District of Nanaimo: Background Context on Rural Village Centres

In 1995 the *Regional Growth Strategies Act* was introduced by the Province of British Columbia. The RDN was selected by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs to engage in what might be represented as a 'pilot' regional growth strategy (RGS) exercise. At the time, the only other Regional Districts engaged in an RGS exercise were largely urban-focused in highly-populated areas (around Vancouver and around Victoria). Thus, it was important that the RDN exercise be thorough as it was to be used as a model for other, more rural/non-metropolitan Regional Districts. Though some of the RDN's electoral areas were supportive of working towards an RGS, others were not as open to the idea. Anticipating this conflict, the Province had mandated that the entirety of the RDN was to

be included in the RGS — no member municipality or electoral area could opt out (Pam Shaw, Personal Communication, June 12, 2012). The ability of the Ministry to require participation was established by legislation in Part 25 of BC's *Local Government Act*.

The RDN's 1996 RGS established urban containment boundaries (UCB) as the primary tactic for managing growth. The UCB is a line on a map that separates lands intended for future urban growth — inside the boundary — from those lands intended to be preserved for rural values — outside the boundary, as highlighted in Figure 3 in Chapter 2. In the case of the RDN's member Municipalities (District of Lantzville, City of Nanaimo, Town of Qualicum Beach, City of Parksville), the *insides* are referred to as *Urban Centres* for the purposes of the UCB strategy; in the electoral areas of the RDN, the *insides* are referred to as *(Rural) Village Centres*.

Around 1995-96, as part of the consideration of the early RGS implementation efforts, the discussion around what came to be further clarified as rural village centres effectively began: what they were, what purpose did they serve, what could they become? The main idea behind establishing these village centres (in rural/unincorporated electoral areas) was that it would create 'a necklace' of village centres, around the urban centres, that would naturally develop throughout the region (Pam Shaw, Personal Communication, June 12, 2012). The original RGS (1997 Growth Management Plan) established fifteen village centres. Since then one Village Centre has incorporated (the Village Centre of Lantzville incorporated as part of the District of Lantzville) and two other Village Centres have combined (Schooner Cover Village Centre is now included as part of Fairwinds Village Centre). The current RGS (2011) now recognizes fourteen Village Centres.

Policy changes to the RGS between 2003 and 2011 resulted in a greater appreciation of differences between areas designated for growth in the RDN's (more urban) municipalities, from those located in the (more rural) electoral areas. The 2011 RGS emphasizes a "more sustainable pattern of population growth and development" and encourages and directs "most new development in the region within designated growth containment boundaries" (Regional District of Nanaimo, 2012e). Part of how this was to be implemented was through an increased focus and emphasis on these 'village centres', in the RDN's unincorporated rural areas. However, some member municipalities of the Regional District, such as the City of Nanaimo, felt that the idea of rural village centres - acting as growth centres for the unincorporated areas — clashed with ideas of smart growth, and encouraged rural sprawl (Andrew Tucker, Personal Communication, September 24, 2012). The RDN felt that the village centres would help to keep "settlement compact, protect the integrity of rural and resource areas and protect the environment" (Regional District of Nanaimo, 2012e). In an attempt to mitigate concerns of the City of Nanaimo (the largest urban area, and the most populous in the region) and to emphasize differences between urban and rural areas, the terminology of 'Village Centres' was replaced specifically reference 'Rural Village Centres' (RVCs). By doing this, it was felt that there was a clear distinction between the preferred primary areas for urban growth (within the incorporated City of Nanaimo boundaries) and other areas which would not offer the same level of servicing (unincorporated 'Rural' Village Centres).

An RVC now refers to a designated part of an electoral area that is intended to accommodate a limited range of land uses and development, appropriate to and

compatible with the specific rural village's character (RDN, 2012a). The current (2011) RGS aims to encourage a diverse mix of land uses in each RVC, affording people the opportunity to live, work, play, and learn within a *walkable* environment (RDN, 2011). However, since the (R)VCs were first established, now nearly fifteen years ago, only a few have achieved some of the attributes associated with relatively complete, compact, mixed-use communities. At present, there is a renewed focus on these RVCs, including a revisiting of the questions: what are they, what purpose do they serve, and what could they be?

Table 4. Summary of Rural Village Centres population and density characteristics*

Rural Village Centre	Land area (Hectares)	Existing # of dwelling units	Population (2.2 per dwelling unit)	Land area (sq.km)	Population density (people/sq.km)	Dwelling unit density (units/hectare)
Cassidy	71	386	849	0.71	1195	5.4
Cedar	275	811	178	2.75	65?	2.9
Extension	67	104	228	0.67	340	1.6
Fairwinds	525	654	1438	5.25	273	1.2
Red Gap	70	290	638	0.7	911	4.1
Bellevue-Church Road	334	325	715	3.34	214	1.0
Coombs	101	101	222	1.01	219	1.0
Errington	20	29	63	0.20	315	1.5
Hilliers	36	108	237	0.36	658	3.0
Qualicum River Estates	43	2	4	0.43	0	0.05
Bowser	63	80	176	0.63	279	1.3
Dunsmuir	115	160	352	1.15	306	1.4
Qualicum Bay	147	92	202	1.47	137	0.6

*Adapted by author from data provided from the Regional District of Nanaimo (www.rdn.bc.ca)

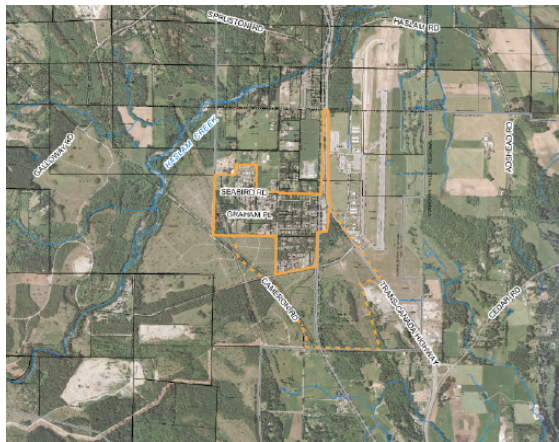
Figure 7. Summary overview of RDN Rural Village Centres



Bellevue-Church



Bowser



Cassidy



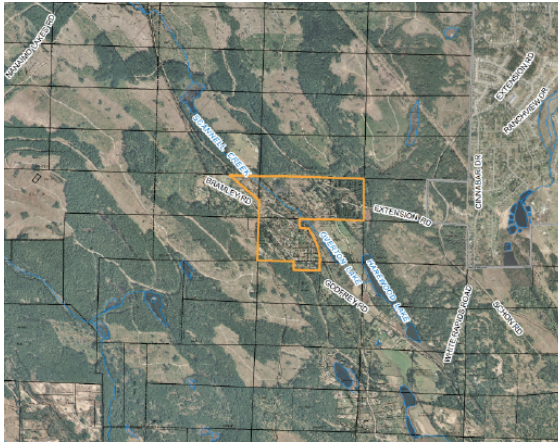
Cedar



Coombs



Errington



Extension



Fairwinds and Schooner Cover



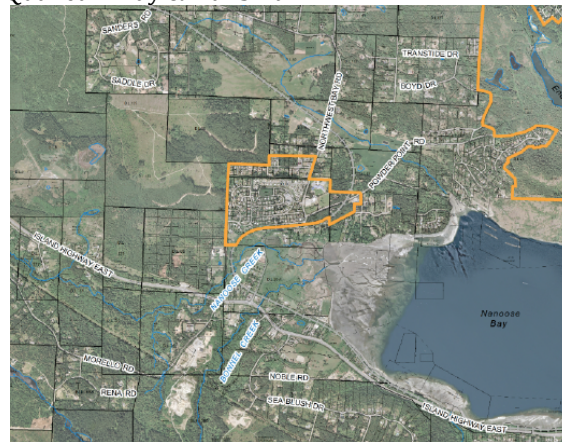
Hilliers



Qualicum Bay & Dunsmuir



Qualicum River Estates



Red Gap

4.2 Rural Growth Management

Planners in the RDN, who have a responsibility for planning in rural areas, apply the growth management strategy of ‘urban containment’. As previously noted, this is the primary method of managing growth in the RDN. While the RDN’s RGS considers ‘urban’ generally to be an area with a variety of land uses with medium to high density, it varies its definition of urban depending on whether it is addressing a municipality (incorporated) or an electoral area (unincorporated) within the regional district (RGS, 2011, p.57). For instance, incorporated areas tend to have higher population densities, allow a greater number of dwelling units per acre, and offer greater servicing such as water, sewer and street lighting. This helps to highlight the different levels of ‘urban’ in the RDN. While the RGS recognizes different ‘levels’ of urban, it does not approach ‘rural’ in the same way. Rather it takes more of a blanket-approach to rural. With respect to ‘rural’ there are the designated rural village centres, which are noted as different than other rural areas, but there has yet to be much thought given to differentiation between rural village centres. As the table above, and the aerial images, indicate — there is considerable variation among RVCs. This is an area that could benefit from increased attention and emphasis in future versions of RDN growth strategies.

To help integrate the *urban* and the *rural* the most recent regional growth strategy (2011) shifted the terminology of *Urban Containment Boundary* to *Growth Containment Boundary* (GCB) as it was perceived to be a more neutral and less urban-centric term. In the RDN, growth management practices are “more about the designated areas for growth having different plans ... compared to plans for areas not designated for growth” (Regional District Planner, Personal Communication, May 17, 2012). Since ‘growth

containment’ for urban centres (the municipalities, where the majority of the RDN’s population growth is intended to go) is significantly different from ‘growth containment’ within the more rural electoral areas, it was felt that the change in terminology from urban containment to growth containment better reflected the objectives of containment boundaries within the electoral areas. ‘Urban’ containment was not identifiable with what was occurring rurally (as these areas were not considered urban places). Rather, the containment approach highlighted ‘growth’ containment, acknowledging that growth was preferred (but confined) in certain areas, but further recognizing it as different from ‘urban’. This approach taken by the RDN — to differentiate the containment definitions in relation to ‘urban’ and ‘growth’ — could be viewed as a way to avoid negative political connotations associated with growth.

A part of the case study portion of this project involved certain key informant interviews specific to the RDN context. Through this, some interview data revealed a perception that, if an area is not growing, it is ‘dying’. While this is not the (official) perception of the RDN, there is an awareness of such perception. The approach in the RDN is closely linked to designating different attributes, to different areas — whether that be residential development, agriculture, or open space preservation. If an area is not growing, it does not mean that it is dying — it means that it has other sources of value.

It is more about where you designate areas for growth versus areas where you designate to preserve other values — such as rural values.
(Regional District Planner)

With fourteen village centres throughout the RDN, each has its own set of characteristics. Geographical setting, location in proximity to main transportation routes, and connection to transit — all affect ease of accessibility. Historical uses, or lack

thereof, influence local character and the sense of place. Levels of water and sewer servicing dictate population/development capacities, thus affecting commercial activities occurring within each RVC. While the RDN's RGS outlines general policies for the Rural Village Centres as a whole, there is further thought and consideration given to each of these very different rural areas. Following guidance outlined in the RGS, the Official Community Plans (OCP) for each electoral area provide direction for village centres within their area. Three of the more populous RVCs now have Village Plans or Neighbourhood Plans, providing some indications of how community design and local planning might be evolved in the future.

<i>Table 5 Summary of Rural Village Centres by Electoral Area, OCP Adoption Date and Local Plan Information</i>				
Rural Village Centre	Electoral Area	OCP Adoption date	Local Plan	Local Plan Title
Cassidy	A	2011	No	-
Cedar	A	1999	In Progress	Cedar Main Street Plan *
Extension	C	1997	No	-
Fairwinds	E	2005	Yes	Lakes District & Schooner Cove Neighbourhood Plans (2011)**
Red Gap	E	2005	No	-
Bellevue-Church Road	F	1999	No	-
Coombs	F	1999	No	-
Errington	F	1999	No	-
Hilliers	F	1999	No	-
Qualicum River Estates	F	1999	No	-
French Creek	G	2008	No	-
Bowser	H	2003	Yes	Bowser Village Centre Plan (2010)
Dunsmuir	H	2003	No	-
Qualicum Bay	H	2003	No	-

*recently finished Cedar Main Street Design Project which will help to inform the plan

**incorporated into the Area E Official Community Plan

4.3 Rural Village Centres: Complete Communities and Agricultural Urbanism

The RDN is currently (as of February 2013) undertaking a region-wide study with the goal of establishing which RVCs have the greatest potential to evolve into mixed-used centres, effectively working towards the goal of becoming a ‘complete community’.

From the perspective of the Regional District, an RVC is intended to be a place that allows people to live, work, play, and learn within a walkable environment; thus it may be inferred there are elements of ‘completeness’ that are inherent. As outlined in the 2011 RGS (Section 4.11), RVCs are places that should be able to attract and support local commercial development, community services and amenities, and regular transit services (RDN, 2011). The RDN recognizes that the existing RVCs are intended to serve the needs of the local population and maintain the rural character of the general surrounding area. In the context of the RDN, it might be inferred that ‘Complete Communities’ can be applied to each RVC, as well as to multiple RVCs — essentially ‘a community of communities’. Interviewees, including planners familiar with the RDN, suggested that in order for the ‘Complete Communities’ concept to be applicable in a rural context, the term would have to be redefined to *fit*, eliminating some aspects (such as transit) or emphasizing others (such as community and public spaces). The RGS prescribes that RVCs are to be locations in which one can live, work, play, and learn within a walkable environment; this could equate to what this region identifies as being necessary to be ‘complete’. The RDN also notes that the RVCs are evolving (RDN, 2011, p.29); this suggests that the ‘completeness’ of each is also changing, perhaps being always ‘complete’ in some respects, but never finished.

While the concept of ‘Complete Communities’ is fairly popular and well understood by planners, the concept of Agricultural Urbanism (AU) is more recent and has yet to receive the same amount of application and appreciation by the professional community. Essentially, AU is a way to incorporate agriculture and food into all realms and scales of a community (de la Salle & Holland, 2010). AU is intended to apply to urban and rural spaces, as well as all spaces in between. These principles (listed in Table 2 in Chapter 2) can be implemented at the regional scale or at the neighbourhood scale.

The Regional District is currently undertaking an Agricultural Area Plan (AAP, with the draft recently finished and submitted to Committee of the Whole (October 2012). The vision statement for the AAP outlines the importance of agriculture in both rural and urban settings, highlighting greater respect for the role of food, food producers, and alternative approaches to food production:

Residents will recognize farming and aquaculture as important industries and will respect the role of food producers within both rural and urban settings. Alternative land tenure arrangements, including new options for housing for family and workers on farmland, will be common practice. Apprenticeships and other farmer training programs will be locally available and more collaboration will occur between farms and between communities to promote shared infrastructure and develop value-added farm products. All levels of government will provide expertise and support for agriculture through: the provision of extension and information; proactive infrastructure, climate change, and emergency planning; and the creation of bylaws and a streamlining of regulations that benefit agriculture and aquaculture. Sustainable farming techniques will be elevated and supported. (Agricultural Area Plan, 2012, p. iii)

The AAP outlines goals to integrate agriculture and aquaculture in the region with all aspects of the RDN including supportive land use regulations and policies, and better incorporating it into the regional land use policy framework (RDN, 2012b, p. 8-12). Though not formally recognized as doing so, nor referring to the recent La Salle/Holland

AU Handbook, the AAP effectively follows principles of Agricultural Urbanism (highlighted in Chapter 2, Table 2) including increasing food access, taking an integrated food and agricultural perspective, creating a rich experience of food and agriculture, and building the local food-agri economy. This is one example of how Agricultural Urbanism might be considered to be ‘practiced’ in planning without the planners involved recognizing so. However, it is regrettable that AU was not directly engaged, especially in the context of RVCs; the Plan privileged the ‘agricultural area’, but did not specifically address the RVCs in this area — a missed opportunity perhaps (to reflect on some of the questions about RVCs being posed in the other study currently underway).

Complete Communities and AU are policy concepts currently circulating in planning circles. They both help to differentiate and specifically characterize a given place, while at the same time offering a context for drawing out complementarities between the *urban* and the *rural*. Complete Communities and AU are also policies that can be closely interrelated to both regional planning and community design, and especially to the better linking of both through placemaking.

4.4 Integration of Regional Planning and Community Design

How regional planning and community design is currently integrated in the RDN, or how they might be better integrated, has been an underlying interest of this MDP. Although, the literature has suggested, by default, that these subjects are effectively treated as polarities, the relevant interviews have suggested that they are linked (at least in the view of the respondents). The case study demonstrates that in the Regional District

of Nanaimo community design and regional planning are well integrated: “this is something that is already happening” (Regional District Planner).

In the RDN’s RGS (2011) the term ‘community design’ appears only once — in reference to social equity and fairness values (influencing community development that “promotes walking, cycling and transit use, creates safe places to live, and fosters active social life enhances access to jobs, goods, services and amenities for an aging population, those who are differently-abled and/or who have low incomes” (p.27)). Community design — effectively planning by the community for the community and reflecting an approach to planning as placemaking — might be claimed by some to occur via the Regional Growth Strategy and via local plans (highlighted in Table 5). The RVCs with local plans presently include Cedar, Fairwinds/Schooner Cove, and Bowser. While none of these local area plans use the term ‘community design’ they all could be considered to be effectively engaging planning **by** the community (through their individual consultation and engagement processes) **for** the community (by working towards local-appropriate policies and integrating RGS policy). For instance, the Bowser Village Plan (2010) identifies issues of community importance and attempts to translate these into appropriate future directions (p.1-6). Similarly, the Schooner Cove area of Fairwinds Rural Village Centre has established a specific neighbourhood plan (2011a) laying out a “detailed framework to guide future growth in a way that balances community values and land owner interests with the RDN’s directives found within the Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) and Nanoose Bay Official Community Plan” (p.1).

The planning function in the RDN currently comprises three main planning functions: current planning, long range planning, and sustainability planning. While each

department has a specific role, each is also associated with a specific perspective on regional planning and what might be considered community design. For instance — current planning functions by working through the implementation of urban design policies and the actualization of community design principles; long range planning works to document and create policies to reflect regional planning needs and the local planning contexts; and sustainability planning offers environmental perspectives in both realms. An example of the multi-faceted planning in the RDN in practice can be seen in a recent project in Electoral Area A, specifically in the Cedar Rural Village Centre.

The RDN recently undertook the Cedar Main Street Design Project. Situated in Electoral Area A, this project could be considered to integrate the new Electoral Area ‘A’ Official Community Plan (OCP) (Fall 2011) with the strategies and policies of the latest RGS (2011), in the context of an RVC. The area covered by this project is located inside one of the RDN’s RVCs (Cedar), and thus is also within the RGS growth containment boundary. The RGS policies dictate that such areas will “provide ready access to places to live, work, plan and learn” (RDN, 2011, p. 16). Key strategies associated with this include “locating most housing, jobs, goods and services and amenities” within these compact, complete RVCs (RDN, 2011, p.18).

During the Area ‘A’ OCP process, the community expressed a “desire to support community diversity, create and preserve community identity and a sense of place, and provide opportunities for local employment, services, and a range of housing types and sizes” (RDN, 2012c). In this instance, the community design appears to have been reflective of the regional planning (as regional growth strategizing), and vice versa. Regional goals were reflected at the community level, as demonstrated by the goals and

intent of the Cedar Main Street Design Project. The intent of this project is to work towards “support [of] a broad range of uses which are oriented towards Cedar Road and create a vibrant place where local residents can go to shop, access services, work, socialize, and participate in recreational activities” (RDN, 2011, p.56). Outcomes included working towards and providing greater information on community services, development strategies, improved design guidelines, sustainable principles, pedestrian encouragement, integration of local food, and appropriate size/massing (RDN, 2011, p.56).

The ‘community design’ associated with the project appears to be reflective of regional aspirations, as demonstrated — for example — by the housing and development choices voiced by the local community. The Cedar Main Street Design Project is a “community planning and design initiative that is the first planning exercise of its kind” for the area (RDN, 2012d). As a result of the RDN’s ability to turn policy into reality this project received, in June 2012, an Honourable Mention by the Planning Institute of British Columbia (PIBC) for excellence in Planning Practice in Small Town and Rural Areas. The RDN case thus yields particular evidence of regional and community planning being potentially well-linked, by design. The Cedar project experience appears to be unprecedented in the RDN context; it will be important to monitor if this becomes the new standard practice.

On the Cedar Project evidence, the planners in the RDN appear to have been able to reflect on previous planning experiences and exercises, and learn from them. It has been demonstrated that though regional planning and community design have been well integrated in this project, there is always room for improvement. Whether this will

become standard practice in other RVCs is an open question; integration is one aspect, but implementation is another.

It is about implementation and what you do with it afterwards. Though plans are well integrated [in the RDN] there is still a bit of a disconnect between what something means in a higher-level plan, and what it actually means in a local level plan. This needs to be considered when you put policies into your regional plan, as to what the implications those are at the local level and what kind of acceptance they might have. (Regional District Planner)

Will the Cedar Project be a one-off, or the new normal? While obviously a good example of good integration of regional planning and community design (as apparently equal stakeholders) RDN planners probably recognize that there is room for further improvement, and opportunities for more learning.

4.5 Other Precedents and Potential Wider Significance

In the literature review (Chapter 2), comparable precedents were identified: Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD), Regional District of North Okanagan (RDNO), Central Okanagan Regional District (CORD), and the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen (South Okanagan, or RDOS). Like the Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN), these areas all have large expanses of significantly populated rural unincorporated areas, incorporated areas (such as towns or municipalities), as well as at least one larger urban centre (refer to Table 3).

While none of these Regional Districts employ ‘RVC’ — or equivalent — terminology, they all recognize some type of ‘rural areas urban-type growth containment’. In the CVRD it is in the form of settlement nodes; the RDNO has rural protection boundaries; RDSO identifies rural growth areas; and the RDOS rural land area protection. With each precedent having a Regional Growth Strategy and Local Area

Plans, it appears that both regional planning and community design is taking place — though community design is not defined as such, but rather perceived and understood — for better or worse — as a form of local planning initiative. The precedent are moving towards ‘live-work-play’ type environments (effectively a “complete communities” approach), but do not appear to offer the same focus on CC as the RDN. Similarly, the precedent areas all seem to suggest that local food is important and are moving toward implementing policies that are reflective of this — but again without linking this to Agricultural Urbanism. What has yet to be determined is the level of integration between regional planning and community design/local planning for each of the potential precedent areas. This is identified as a possible area of future research.

One deliberate and important factor to note, for the potential precedent areas and the case study, is that they are all located within British Columbia. Selecting potential precedent areas within the same province (BC) also ensures they operate within the same legislative framework. In BC there is also the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC), an independent provincial agency which governs land use in favour of agriculture. The ALC outlines policies and administers the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) in a way which favours agricultural uses over others. All of the study areas (Nanaimo, Comox, North Okanagan, Central Okanagan, Okanagan-Similkameen) have lands in the ALR. ALC policies can have an effect on regional planning and community design initiatives of any given local government. There is effectively another provincial-level layer arching over the regional and community design planning frameworks in ALR areas

Also of interest is the District of Lantzville. Originally one of the (Rural) Village Centres of the RDN, it has since incorporated as a municipality. While the significance

of Lantzville's incorporation will become clearer later in this study (refer to Section 6.2.3) this District offers an example of what might happen when a Rural Village Centre has the desire, will, and means to harness the basic advantages of having a local government of its own. This is perhaps something that other existing RVCs will push for in the future.

In summary the RDN appears to offer one good 'go-to' example (the recent Cedar Main Street Project) of community design as an integral part of well-integrated regional growth management context. Community design appears to offer a way for planning and design to be for the community, by the community — rather than something imposed from on high, by a Regional District in this case.

4.6 Chapter Summary

From the case study it can be inferred that the Regional District of Nanaimo has the ability to facilitate discussions of how regional planning and community design have the potential to be more-closely integrated. While new to this endeavor themselves, it appears that the linking of these two typically polar opposites (regional planning and community design) is something that the RDN is currently pursuing and — based on discussions with local planners — will continue to be pursued. With the case study addressing the evolution of the RDN's RGS, there is the ability to examine policy changes over the years, and infer the political temperament of the time. This may help to gain perspectives on the evolving relationship between community design and regional planning.

Rural Village Centres play a crucial role in growth management in the unincorporated

areas of the RDN, but the role they play may need redefining and reconfiguration as to how the related policy can be better applied to reflect the current context. Rural Village Centres are becoming less ‘rural’ and more ‘urban’ but do not comfortably ‘fit’ into either sphere. The RDN offers a context that is potentially similar to other areas (identified in Section 2.5). The RDN RVC policies offer a platform to discuss transitioning to ‘completeness’ — not only as to how ‘complete’ is understood, but also how the rural-urban continuum (along an AU transect for example) might be interpreted in developing unincorporated areas. This indicates that the planning and design needs of unincorporated rural areas near expanding urban areas are changing and these changes need to be reflected in practice and policy.

CHAPTER 5

INTERVIEWS - RESULTS AND FINDINGS

In line with the literature review, and the structuring of the case study findings, the interviews focused on three main areas:

- rural areas regional planning experiences, approaches, and growth management techniques/strategies (the regional planning context);
- placemaking and villaging/village-making appropriate to the rural context (the community design context); and
- the integration of community design and regional planning, through mobilization of such concepts as Complete Communities and Agricultural Urbanism.

In combination with the literature review (Ch 2) and the case study (Ch 3), the key informant interviews round out the main research tactics deployed to investigate the research questions and the underlying research problems at the core of this MDP. The interview process, results, and related findings are summarized here (a complete set of interview questions, including the visual context summary and working definitions provided to interviewees, can be found in Appendix 2).

5.1 Summary of Interviews

In total, eleven key informants were interviewed with experiences ranging from local and provincial governments, to consulting and academia. There were seventeen questions asked of each participant (see Appendix 2a). The following summarizes information collected during the

interview process and is intended to further inform responses to the research questions, complementing the insights gleaned from the case study and the literature review.

5.1.1 *Regional Planning and Rural Areas Growth Management*

The first set of questions explored regional planning; specifically, how planners planning in rural areas experienced, approached, and applied growth management techniques and strategy. These questions focused primarily on the rural realm, and on the urban/rural fringe from a rural perspective, as this is where a gap was noted in the course of the literature review.

Regarding growth management practices in the fringe areas, it was heard repeatedly from the interviewees that this is an area that has been neglected by planning, that planning practices need to be better differentiated to better recognize the specific fringe context; the operative values are local-context specific.

The fringe is the most important edge, in terms of planning, and probably where we have done the worst job of planning — which has led to the most problems.
(*Regional District Planner*)

It was stated that fringe areas are difficult to plan — but that this is an area of increasing importance that requires careful, appropriate planning. Fringe areas are considered the “most problematic areas to be managed” (*Consultant*) as these tend to be areas of conflicting land uses and higher tensions “both with regards to different values, different priorities, and different expectations” (*Municipal Planner*). Simply put, in the fringe areas, “we have to do things different” than the way we do now (*Regional District Planner*); “the whole tool and policy set has to be different” (*Academic*).

We always hear from the people who live close to the city, in the rural areas, who ask: “Why isn’t there better bus service, why don’t we have sidewalks, why don’t we have more parks?” (*City Planner*)

One planner suggested that it is not so much simply planning practices that need to be differentiated for these areas, but that there needs to be more thought given to all location-specific and context-specific issues. Where the community is, and what its values are, may result in a hierarchy of local preferences; for example, street-lights may be essential in one area but not important for others. While the fringe areas are different than a ‘pure’ urban or a ‘pure’ rural context, fringes also differ from one another. Those who live in a ‘fringe’ area do not necessarily view their surroundings as such; some identify their fringe setting as urban whereas others suggest it is rural. Similarly, rural residents do not always perceive their surroundings as rural:

There is a real perception of people who live there — there is a perception as people here think they do live in a rural place (they don’t). (*Regional District Planner*)

The general consensus among interviewees was that each area is different and that ‘we’, as planners, must not only recognize the fringe in general as important, but also recognize the differences among different parts or pieces of the fringe. One planner stated that: “practices must be tailored to the context of the community.” This is where the place perspective becomes important, and especially the notion of planning as placemaking — very different from planning focused on space, and localities in more regional or provincial or national settings.

The growth management dynamic is fundamentally about the fringe areas because that is where you end up with the drama of the present and the future. The decisions you are making may seem reasonable today, but can’t be seen as just (for) today. Growth management is like game theory — public versus private, short term and long term. (*Consultant*)

There are multiple approaches that could be employed in response to rural areas facing development pressures. While a consultant planner suggested that there is no single approach, the majority of the other planners interviewed — including other consultants, municipal, city,

regional district, and provincial planners — offered *urban containment* as their preferred approach. One regional district planner even suggested that what is key to rural area growth management is ensuring that the “approach being taken corresponds to the need”; the wrong approach to a given situation will not generate the desired outcome. This planner offered that rural area growth management “provides rationale and context for regional planning.”

The majority of the interviewees indicated that ‘growth management via (urban) containment’ was the most favoured approach:

Ideally, you want to have a system where the region has to vet major decisions around urban growth boundaries, where they cannot be lightly changed. I think the urban growth boundary tool is really crucial — you set a line in the sand and then do not cross it. You set aside urban reserves within the existing urban boundaries to accommodate propensity for growth and you densify first before you even fill in those urban reserves. You don’t reconsider the urban growth boundary until you’ve absolutely exhausted all other possibilities. I think that is really crucial. *(Academic)*

Regardless of the approach to growth containment, there are particular outcomes to be anticipated. When considering the planning and community design implications of strong urban containment, and clearly distinguishing rural from urban spaces, a range of objectives were offered - from place preservation, to the perceived meeting of needs, and the aligning of perceived realities with quantifiable goals and prescribed means.

Preserving the distinct sense of place in different parts of the region is really important. It’s not just practical things, but is also about preserving the authentic sense of place and the higher needs of human beings. *(Academic)*

Planning generally involves large areas that are going to have a wide variety of uses. The community design implication is that you need to quantify the community values and make sure those are wrapped in there. *(Regional District Planner)*

In reality — people want things — so community design is trying to quantify what the community really values and design/institute regulations, such as subdivision servicing standards, that reflect that. It is a way to codify what people value. *(Municipal Planner)*

When further discussing growth containment, seven of the eleven interviewees offered the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) and the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) model as growth management/containment that is appropriate in the context of unincorporated rural areas

It is difficult for the local governments to say no; whereas the ALC has no trouble at all saying no. This type of policy needs to be considered. It tends to not be a very popular one to implement, but in terms of long-term thinking, it is pretty important. (*Consultant*)

The ALR model offers one type of implementation action for the rural context, but from a provincial government level of interest. Another way to implement a preferred form/level/intensity of growth management/containment appropriate for unincorporated rural electoral areas is via regional and municipal policies and bylaws.

I think the best way to protect the values of rural residents is what you are talking about — preserving the land for agriculture and resource uses, requires strict control. You need to have strong urban containment boundaries and limits on servicing, but the third piece is having a zoning bylaw that actually takes the policies and puts them into action. (*City Planner*)

The best approach is having clear bylaws, policies, and incentives around keeping the rural area rural and [to] encourage increased densities within the urban containment areas — that you've got both sides of growth management, both the protection side and the encouragement side. (*Municipal Planner*)

One Regional District Planner emphasized that, while the management policy is important, the “hardest thing to do is the implementation. The planning part is more doable than the follow-up implementation.” This planner stressed the difficulties of unintended outcomes of well-intentioned policy — which is similarly highlighted in the distinction between plan-making and plan-implementation in Hodge and Gordon’s *Planning Canadian Communities* (2008). Another Regional District Planner highlighted the challenge of interpreting and applying broad regional policies at the community level. It was common consensus among the interviewed planners that, though (for the most part) the preferred growth management approach is containment, there is no

single *best approach* to rural area growth management — as appropriate approaches will vary depending on the community, the context, and current realities. There needs to be a sensitivity to place considerations, and to an approach to planning that privileges place-making by the people in/of the place/s in question. While all interviewees were supportive of regional planning, the broad-brush approach commonly associated with multi-locality planning was also considered to present challenges.

Challenges are that you might have a general policy agreement at the regional level of where you want to see growth and where you want to see other values protected. But outcomes are not always reflective of the policy intent. (*Regional District Planner*)

While it was felt that there was sometimes a disconnect between regional policy and locality implementation, context was once again highlighted.

Every community, every region is unique in its own way. Finding an approach that works for a community takes a great deal of work, discussion. The most appropriate way to move forward is to determine what the needs of the community are and develop tools which are appropriate for the vision moving forward. (*Regional District Planner*)

It all depends what it is — rurally it varies to allow different things for different people. You have to look at what the actual rural value is, look at what the community wants in respect to that and hopefully try to achieve that. It has to match the community preferences, but also phased in some reality. (*Regional District Planner*)

‘Politics’ were noted as another recurring challenge with urban development containment in mainly rural contexts. A Provincial Planner observed that: “Planning is inherently political and decisions surrounding how to manage a region or a community need to be informed” by the community, by the local government, by individuals, by those offering inklings that will help to advance, adapt and guide policies, practices and decisions. Rather than a rigid yes/no approach, this can be perceived as a more flexible/responsive/collaborative approach to planning.

Elected officials want to have capacity and options to approve, if it is in the interest of the community, regardless of the policy. (*Regional District Planner*)

It is very challenging — if people aren't onside; it is very difficult for the politicians to be onside. I think the barriers are political. (*Regional District Planner*)

While 'rural (area) growth management', specifically 'urban-type' growth in rural settings, has its challenges, a Planning Consultant noted that: "every challenge presents an opportunity." The challenges presented by rural region growth management provided the basis for discussion around strategizing growth containment, which is what the second grouping of interview questions explored.

5.1.2 Placemaking, Villaging/Village-Making, and Complete Communities

The second grouping of questions, exploring the community design aspect, probed for information linked to placemaking and villaging/village-making — especially in the context of Complete Communities. These questions sought to examine the importance (or otherwise) of placemaking as viewed by planners, how concepts of *village* can (or should) be employed, and how the typically urban concept of Complete Communities relates to the rural settings.

Placemaking is an incredibly important concept that we, as planners, lost sight of for many years and fortunately now it is making a comeback. (*Consultant*)

All of the interviewees were familiar with concepts of placemaking. The majority encouraged the concept as it was felt that placemaking helps to enliven a given location with a sense of greater attachment, meaning, and context for the people in/of the place, who 'make' the place, who make an otherwise 'locality' — or a place, where the people see themselves instead as a 'we'. However, these particular interviewees were of the view that, though placemaking can be considered to play out at both the regional and the local level, these were considered to be two very different scales. It was evident from the respondents' offerings that, for them at least,

regional-scale placemaking presented greater difficulties than local-scale placemaking. For instance:

Placemaking is absolutely essential. At the regional level it is much more difficult to translate placemaking into policy because it is rooted in the context of the community or even a particular neighbourhood. There can be guidance provided from placemaking. *(Regional District Planner)*

At the regional level, I don't know about placemaking. In a way we are saying, as a region, we value these things and we want it to look this way, but I don't know if people actually think of it this way. It is something people think of at the local level. *(Municipal Planner)*

I think placemaking gets more into (the) local domain. From a regional perspective the objectives need to be complementary and supportive of local policies, but goals and strategies have to transcend municipal and community boundaries. Regionally, we are more focused on the bigger picture of compact development, preservation, and integrity of rural areas — ecological and environmental protection, efficient use of regional infrastructure, climate action — those bigger themes that aren't necessarily oriented towards placemaking as they are larger planning concepts. *(City Planner)*

Regional-level placemaking was interpreted as playing more of a guiding role as it was suggested that there are a multitude of identities found in a given region, and each identity equates to a different placemaking approach. As one planner put it:

Regional planning is about finding the commonalities of all these identities. You are negotiating an agreement, a common vision and the policies that will move you toward that vision. Everybody has a different approach to their community and a different concept of how to move the broader vision forward. *(Regional District Planner)*

This was echoed by another Regional District Planner as it was felt that there must be “guidance at the regional level, but it is difficult to define a sense of place broadly.” Although most respondents offered supportive comments for placemaking in rural areas, a few critiques were noted. One Consultant Planner suggested that placemaking should not occur in a rural setting; it was felt that individuals using place and placemaking as tools to aid in development of rural areas were perhaps using these tools where development was not appropriate. A Provincial

Planner suggested that in rural areas it is typically a similar group of community members that engage in planning exercises, thus resulting in community placemaking initiatives that may not be representative of what the community at large wants a place to be like. While these critiques provided points for discussion, they were far outweighed by Planners who indicated the importance, vitality, and deliberate need for placemaking, especially when speaking to the importance of placemaking in the rural context.

Placemaking certainly jumps out to me as a vital component of a successful village. I think many times when people want to go to a village it's because they want to have something and get away from the soul-sucking sameness of every city. Maybe the village is more organic, is how it's grown, less rules, local flavour is able to develop. It is unique, there is something different there. Buildings don't look like a strip mall; it's much more organic in how it's developed. Placemaking — planned or unplanned — is what brings people to a lot of these villages. (*City Planner*)

Being deliberate about placemaking is hugely important. (*Academic*)

I think placemaking is partly the physical characteristics and partly the social interactions that are enabled there. Sometimes that is facilitated by physical design, whether or not there is an open square, meeting places used regularly — for developing a sense of vibrancy in the community. People are living, working, playing there rather than just getting groceries. (*Provincial Planner*)

In some cases, ideas surrounding placemaking naturally arose prior to the formal interview question being presented. This was specifically observed when discussing 'villaging'. When asked about the concept of 'rural village centre', it was stated that "every one is different" as it is important that each village exudes a unique sense of place (*Regional District Planner*). Sense of place was noted as a critical element in making a rural village centre successful (*Academic*). Interviewees were further probed for what they thought about the village concept — specifically in the rural context — as well as how this concept would have to be differentiated to be successful in a non-urban environment.

The idea of a ‘rural village centre’ generated many lengthy discussions with interviewees. One planner offered that other critical elements for success include “political will, aesthetic development and a sense of place, as this makes people feel their quality of life is enhanced” and will draw people to these rural village centres (*Academic*). Another stated that critical elements included “having public spaces and third spaces like a pub or café — any place that acts as a magnet and draws people” — and to program these spaces and treat them like a local events site (*Consultant*). A third planner identified that there must be “a commitment to supporting local business. There has to be a commitment by the community to make [the rural village centre] its primary centre rather than just a nice thing to have” (*Provincial Planner*). A fourth planner stressed that it is critically important to identify and recognize how a rural village centre *fits* into the regional context, as this helps to define the characteristics of individual centres, and to provide future development guidance (*City Planner*).

All planners interviewed mentioned at least one of the following as a critical element for success of a rural village centre: mixed-use; connection to transportation; and employment opportunities. While multiple elements critical for success were highlighted, some respondents did not necessarily think that the rural village centre concept naturally fitted into their interpretations of rural area growth management. A Consultant Planner suggested that there is “nostalgia associated with the rural village, which just doesn’t match up with current reality”; this, for them, did not fit into current applicable growth management practices. A City Planner echoed this stating that “villages are a bit passé.” Along the same train of thought, a Regional District Planner suggested that “you can’t artificially create a village centre; the idea of a village concept really isn’t practical.” Another Consultant Planner suggested rethinking the terminology:

I'd be inclined to drop the term of rural village and call them *rural service centres*. Village has implications of (a) little church, little school, a few other little things that are cute and quaint, and everybody all gets along, but it has the sense of being more complete, in terms of having more amenities and so on. There are places in the rural areas that offer a few services, but I would challenge the notion that it is possible to have a RVC. When village centres existed historically, it was because it was hard to get around and you only went into town once a month. We are well past that, which is why such village centres do not exist any more. (*Consultant*)

Worth mentioning is the reality that none of the interviewees lived in any of the RVCs nor could with authority about any RVC as a place, or themselves as a placemaker within any RVC context. That being said many interviewees did identify closely with the 'rural' and provided firsthand personal offerings of experiences in this setting. When interviewees were offering data about village centres answers were more clinical, academic and definitive with some planners thinking that the village concept is less than appropriate for a rural setting. A Consultant Planner stated quite clearly that regardless of the setting — whether urban or rural — the concept is still relevant:

I think the core concepts of an urban village or a rural village is the same. It is a concentration of people in a fairly small, defined area that have a fairly wide range of uses and diversity of housing in an organized form. I think at a deep level, urban and rural villages are the same in DNA. (*Consultant*)

All in all, one third of the Planners interviewed provided plausible criticism in relation to the RVC concept. However, in further discussing this approach with interviewees, most agreed that a village centre or 'villaging' concept is consistent with rural growth management practices — it just may require some tweaking to better fit the rural realm. Similar views were also expressed when discussing the policy concept of Complete Communities in the rural setting.

The main purpose of asking interviewees questions related to Complete Communities was to explore some hunches around how this concept might fit in relation to rural village centres, on

their own, and as a collectivity, or system of centres. While the majority of planners embraced the concept, they had reservations about how it applied in the rural village centre policy context.

In planner-speak, I think it is very difficult to ever have a ‘complete’ RVC. You must be large enough to have all these things to be complete, but then are probably no longer a village, but then you are probably really running contrary to the core values of these rural residents — it’s no longer the place we move to ‘to get away from the city’; it’s becoming the city. (*City Planner*)

A Municipal Planner suggested that achieving *completeness* was about appropriateness and viability:

It is about appropriate densities and uses, also recognizing (that) the employment opportunities in these village centres are less than what you would find [in] a larger urban centre. But in order to make them viable, there needs to be employment opportunities. Otherwise you are less likely to create that more complete community. (*Municipal Planner*)

An Academic Planner suggested that it is difficult for rural centres to achieve completeness, but highlighted transit as a possible way to facilitate this:

Rurally, I don’t think you can ever (have) Complete Communities in the full sense. I think (it is) harder for rural areas in general to be complete, unless they are very well linked to transit. But you can do the best you can around this by having residential, the broadest array of services possible and some employment. (*Academic*)

Questioning whether completeness was attainable rurally was a recurring comment by the planners being interviewed. One planner felt that Complete Communities needed to be redefined for the rural context:

You’d have to redefine Complete Communities within a rural context. The live-work-play element would have to disappear, and there is a need to increase the amount of weighting you place on community identity when it’s tied to a certain location. Also, the type of amenities you would be referencing. Complete Communities talks about all the amenities required to be a community — the quality of life — you’d have to redefine this as it’s not cost-effective to provide all the amenities. (*Regional District Planner*)

Similarly, another planner stated that it was *how* one defines Complete Communities that would determine if the concept was appropriate rurally:

Depends on how you define Complete Communities. If you are talking about a complete community where all the needs of the residents can be met, or they can use other transportation options to meet these needs, that they have all the services and amenities they require and they have access to employment...rurally — at least the transportation element would have to be eliminated. (*Regional District Planner*)

A third planner suggested that the concept of Complete Communities — but not fully complete — may work in the rural areas, but not to the same extent as it does in urban areas:

Complete Communities sort of works rurally, but not as much as it does in the cities. Yes to Complete Communities rurally, but not fully complete — and you need transit. (*Consultant*)

In contrast, there were other planners who thought Complete Communities were not appropriate:

Complete Communities is not a realistic achievement — like a blanket requirement that every place be complete. (*Consultant*)

I think the word complete is a stupid one to use. The idea it's complete — if every one can be different then what does complete mean? The idea of completeness is too simplistic; it has to be taken into the regional context. (*Regional District Planner*)

Despite some criticism surrounding the concept of Complete Communities in rural settings, the above Regional District Planner did offer further considerations — to think of complete in a regional context. Another planner echoed this line of thought, introducing the idea of a *catchment* concept:

Complete needs to be considered more broadly than the rural village concept. It would have to have more of a catchment concept. The rural community would be the first location residents would go to attempt to meet their needs prior to moving on to the next community. (*Regional District Planner*)

Thinking of *complete* in a regional context — or as a catchment area — may allow an RVC to achieve a level of completeness that would be unattainable if it was only perceived in a localized context. A City Planner, currently working in a management role, noted that moving towards completeness in the rural sense would include a broader approach, through regional planning, including incorporation of “policies and strategies that address economic development,

employment, and encouraging mixed-use development.” That being said, another Planner suggested that regional-scale involvements are limited:

A regional planning document is limited in what it can do with regards to Complete Communities. It is really an encouragement/support role with the main objective of containing those settlement areas as compact land areas with the larger goal of preserving the rural areas for other resource-based activities. *(Regional District Planner)*

While interviewees shared thoughts and knowledge related to RVCs and Complete Communities, the aspect of context was again highlighted as important. A City Planner talked about how rural residents define and consider things differently than their city counterparts:

This idea of Complete Communities in rural areas, we have to be careful because if you ask a resident in the rural area what a complete community is for them, it is something very different (from) what I have in my mind for living in the city. If I ask my parents, who live in a rural area, what it means, they would say it's complete because they have a post office and a variety store. It doesn't speak to the fact that 80 percent of the residents go to their place of employment that is half an hour away. *(City Planner)*

A Regional District Planner made a very similar comment, stating that “rural residents have a different understanding and value of what a complete community is” than their urban counterparts — and this affects how they view, define, and interpret completeness. A Provincial Planner stated that “complete has a different meaning in a large city than in a rural community” but indicated that it is not so much a ‘rural versus urban’ issue:

Nothing huge is jumping out at me when considering Complete Communities in a rural versus urban setting. It is all dependent on the scale, context, and size of the community. You are still going to have social needs that need to be filled, service needs that will need to be filled, or people go elsewhere. There are the same sorts of needs people will have — urban or rural — just at different scales, contexts, and sizes. *(Provincial Planner)*

A possible perspective which may allow for Complete Communities to be more rurally-applicable is by considering the region as a ‘community of communities’. If considering the *region* as the *community* — at least in terms of completeness — this may help to address some

planners' concerns that rural locales will never be 'complete' as they will always be without something that an urban site possess (such as transit or servicing). By considering the region as a community of communities, it also more easily allows for placemaking to be interpreted and applied at a regional scale — something in which planners' interviewed identified as difficult to achieve. The suggestion that Complete Communities should be considered via scale, size, context and as a community of communities — rather than urban or rural — may help make more sense of the varied views presented, and aid in better integration of regional planning and community design — the focus of the final section of interview questions.

5.1.3 *Integrating Regional Planning and Community Design*

The final formalized grouping of interview questions focused on examining better integration of community design and regional planning. Concepts of Complete Communities (CC) and Agricultural Urbanism (AU) were discussed and helped launch the conversation and effectively exploring the linking of community design and regional planning. These questions focused on gaining an understanding of what planners thought of community design and regional planning, and how they are connected. They further addressed concepts of CC and AU, and the plausibility of these concepts (or others) as providing improved ties between community-based/design-based planning (in what are effectively 'localities' in a regional district context) and regional district-based/RGS-based planning (in the context of the RDN).

With the idea of community design, it is important [that] it is reflective of community values, the context, the history — and that regional planning is kind of informing it and feeding into the community-based planning. They really inform each other. (*Municipal Planner*)

The primary purpose of this line of questioning was to discuss views and experiences relating to the explicit or implicit integration of community design and regional planning. Discussed first

was the interviewees' working understanding of community design/community-based planning, regional planning, and the relationship between the two. It should be noted at the outset that there seemed to be a tendency for many interviewees to simply equate 'community design' with 'local planning' — whereas an attempt to make a distinction between the two has been a critical feature of this study. The unincorporated status of the 'communities/localities' in question did not appear to factor into many of the interviewees' responses — whereas this has been a central consideration in this study. These tendencies appeared to mitigate against the kind of careful in-depth consideration (by interviewees) of the linking aspect that has formed a central premise of this study. These considerations will clearly have to be factored into the following interviewee offerings, at the final analysis stage.

As all individuals interviewed had practical experience working with or relating to a regional government setting associated with BC regional districts, they had much to offer when asked about their understanding of regional planning. A Municipal Planner underlined a distinction of scale:

My working understanding [of] Regional Planning — higher level, higher scale, more broad-based. Whereas you are going to community-based — finer scale, more detailed. That is a cursory answer. (*Municipal Planner*)

Another Planner, from a regional district, emphasized that relationship and partnership is key, especially at the regional level, to ensure that regional plans translate well to the locality or community level:

In my experience, regional planning is all about relationships; it is about partnerships. And understanding the communities' wants and desires — at the same time making certain the policy decisions being made are technically supportable, but also politically supportable and supportable within the community. When dealing with regional planning, you are establishing a working partnership — with the councils, with your counterparts at the municipal level, with administrators — and making sure once the plan is adopted that there is a

desire to actually fully incorporate those regional planning principles and policies at the local level. (*Regional District Planner*)

Though there was an overall high degree of familiarity and comfort with regional planning, one City Planner stressed that, though this type of planning is well understood, it is not without its difficulties:

Regional planning is more difficult. We are concerned with the wider spectrum of the physical environment, both the human and natural component. Hopefully, regional planning looks more broadly at some of these issues that cross municipal boundaries — issues of water and transportation that only work if you step back and look at it on a regional basis. Sometimes difficult for people to understand where they sit in the regional context, and they are making decisions based on values only in their local context without understanding really about the broad goals and aims of growth management. (*City Planner*)

A similar notion of the importance of regional planning ‘understanding’ community design, and vice versa, was communicated by many of the interviewees. Coordination, connection, and cohesion were noted as important characteristics of a successful relationship between regional planning and community design:

It is about coordinating activities together and contributing together. For successful local planning, it’s about realigning your local vision ... realizing your role and aspirations within that regional vision. (*Regional District Planner*)

It is all connected. You start with the region, having some sort of general designations. Then follow through in making sure your community plans are consistent with regional planning. And then into neighbourhood plans — making sure it is all consistent. (*Regional District Planner*)

It is about cohesion. Though policies begin at the regional level, they often get implemented at the local level, which is how regional planning ties in with the community design piece. (*Consultant*)

While every Planner interviewed recognized there is a connection between regional planning and community design, only a few managed to cohesively explain how. This included an Academic Planner who offered Patrick Condon’s quote — “the site is to the region as the cell is to the body” — as a summary of interconnection:

You really have [to] plan at the microcosm level in such a way that you are enhancing your vision of what the macrocosm should be. If you are not practicing what you're preaching at the local level, you will never achieve at the regional. (*Academic*)

This was echoed by a Consulting Planner who suggested “both [regional and community planning] are very much needed,” as regional planning creates the general outline that community planning fits into, but it is at the community level where this outline is filled in.

When the question was reversed from “Can you briefly outline your own working understanding of regional planning and its relation to community-based planning,” to “Can you briefly explain your own working understanding of community design and its relationship to regional planning,” there was still ample information offered but, in many cases, it was evident that regional planning was a more comfortable role for the interviewees to discuss. Though interviewees were provided with a working definition of community design, in some cases, this term was interchanged with urban design — rather than community-based/design-based local planning. When this occurred interviewees were more comfortable discussing concepts of community design in the urban environment:

Community design? To me when you put in design, it is very much placemaking and architectural. (*Provincial Planner*)

I think of it in a city context, perhaps in how they approach neighbourhood plans. The relationship is that the neighbourhood plans should ultimately fit under the regional growth management plan. You need to meet the general goals and objectives. (*City Planner*)

This is difficult to answer. My concepts of community design are much more grounded urbanely. When translating [community design] into the regional policy context — it is about trying to link community design at the neighbourhood level to regional planning. (*Regional District Planner*)

The terminology of community design was confusing for many planners — some affiliating it with ‘urban design’. One Consulting Planner flat out stated that “the term *community design* is ambiguous — use *local land use planning*.” With reference to other planners interviewed, many

(when asked about community design) touched on the design context, local design guidelines, structural, and aesthetic elements. Part of the working premise for this project has been the possible association of placemaking with a form of planning by design (Wight 2011), potentially at both a regional and local scale — the local here taking the form of ‘community design’. This premise did not appear to be shared by most interviewees — so far; it may emerge in the future. The interview results were nevertheless revealing for helping to establish a sense of the currently experienced linkages (or otherwise) between community design and regional planning, in this case study context.

Another concept, Agricultural Urbanism (AU), was introduced as a way to generate discussion around its associated potential, as another linking venue, in relation to rural-region growth management in general and village centre development in particular. The premise here was around the possibility of ‘rural village centres’ being valued as forms of ‘agricultural urbanism’. Even though a definition of AU was provided to interviewees prior to answering the interview questions associated with AU, nine out of eleven requested further information, as they were unfamiliar with the term — and three indicated they had never heard of it before. The latter three felt they could not offer any useful information regarding this concept. For those who were comfortable addressing AU, it appeared to be a concept under development or ‘in progress’ — yet to enter the broader planning consciousness:

At this point it is really a concept but hasn’t really been implemented. (*Academic*)

The concept has potential — but is a bit amorphous. (*Consultant*)

Seems like an interesting concept, but agriculture can mean a lot of stuff. Scale and purpose of agriculture can lead to really great synergies, or really great conflicts. It’s a good idea in theory — but the theory and the practice have to come together. (*Regional District Planner*)

While it was felt that AU has potential and is evolving into something applicable to regional growth management across the urban-rural spectrum, it was repeatedly suggested by the three interviewees that the term ‘Agricultural Urbanism’ be revisited, and a more fitting name considered:

Based on the definition of Agricultural Urbanism, that is all happening. The term is not in common use yet. It is happening; people just don’t call it that. Especially the urbanism part — as it doesn’t really fit. *(Regional District Planner)*

It hasn’t really taken hold. I think it is happening — it is just not being called that. *(Regional District Planner)*

Might not be the right term for it; seems like ‘what are [we] going to do in the city about it?’ When you look at the actual definition, it goes beyond that. May need to change the name. *(Consultant)*

The part that puzzles me is the urbanism. The term urbanism is throwing me off. *(Consultant)*

Although there was a degree of uncertainty regarding the name, most respondents did agree that AU is a concept that could be valuable to regional planning, local planning, and the planning profession. One Planner indicated that the AU strategy would help to reduce conflicts and enhance success, while another indicated the following approach is necessary:

The regional model of AU is a strategy for reducing conflicts, enhancing farmers’ successes and, in some ways, locking in some of these urban areas even more. It’s a big topic, and the conversation is just starting. There is a lot of potential here — this is a both/and rather than an either/or approach. *(Consultant)*

A regional perspective is useful and necessary. Including agriculture in urban and rural areas is really smart. It is a sustainable practice — it is smart for lots of different reasons. *(Regional District Planner)*

When considering this concept’s applicability to RVCs, CC, and rural area growth management, the interviewees offered comments suggesting that AU fits with, and complements, the concept of ‘completeness’:

[AU] would enhance the rural village and help make those areas more self-sufficient and complete, to an extent. It also enhances food security and food knowledge — where food comes from — which I think is very important for building healthy communities. (*Municipal Planner*)

Agricultural Urbanism fits with Complete Communities, because Complete Communities has an agriculture side of things. (*Regional District Planner*)

Food is an essential requirement for life; it should be included everywhere. The implication is that Complete Communities can serve and provide for all the needs for residents. It might be, in the case of Agricultural Urbanism, may be more appropriate to say *complete regions*. (*Consultant*)

You can have a more complete community in the rural environment if you embrace the AU model. (*Consultant*)

In discussing AU's applicability to different contexts, interviewees were asked what they thought about concepts such as CC and AU as ways to improve the connection between regional planning and community design. Though the literature review indicated that these two areas of planning may often be siloed — this is not what was discovered in the interview process. One Planner deduced that the bridging of polarities is already occurring:

When you raise the question for community design, one of the things AU highlighted is that there is a draw for fitting multiple uses together. But just because it does this, doesn't mean it isn't already happening. (*Consultant*)

Similarly, another Planner felt that the connection was already there and it was the implementation that should be the focus:

This is something that is already happening. It won't help to better bridge, but it's more about how much is going on and how much you were doing. Complete Communities is part of regional planning and community design. It is not about introducing a new concept and seeing if it will work better. It's already in place — it is more about the implementation. You know what you want to do regionally and locally; it is about implementation and what you do with it afterwards. It is not about the concepts improving things; it's what you do with your plan afterwards. (*Regional District Planner*)

A third Planner believed that the concepts discussed provided a good bridge, but needed to be approached carefully from a regional context:

I think they are really a good bridge. A complete community is to have a more whole place. This part needs to be carefully done — in a regional context — so they are supported together because complete is never complete. Then Agricultural Urbanism, regardless of what term you use, is very complementary and a way to bridge. Better designed, more complete supportive development and recognizing food security and agricultural production is an important part of those things. This is a bridge between reaching your regional goals and community goals. *(Regional District Planner)*

This planner suggested it is good to bring forth such concepts for discussion and, while they may act as a bridge, successes depend on context:

Potentially they draw regional planning and community design closer. These concepts would be very specific to particular communities and in some communities these concepts are already closely aligned. The concepts would be good to begin the discussion, making sure that there are linkages at the local and regional level. It would be useful to bring these concepts into the discussion. *(Regional District Planner)*

Based on their experience as planners in the British Columbia context, the majority of respondents indicated that community design (often rendered, it seemed, as ‘local planning’) and regional planning are already well-connected. When asked if they felt there were other concepts that should be considered to better connect regional planning (for growth strategizing) and community design (for rural villages), some interesting perspectives emerged:

If we are just looking along the lines of political boundaries, it [is] not necessarily addressing what we need it to. We need to look at the carrying capacity of the land, or the natural resources — what is the ecology/biodiversity of this particular area and are we adequately addressing it? *(Municipal Planner)*

Similarly, another Planner suggested listening to the community as well as looking beyond the city:

Too often you hear things like “what the city is deciding to do out here.” It is beyond just the city’s boundaries, it is everywhere in a region. The main thing is to start from what people would like to see — what people respect, what values they have — that definitely has to be part of any kind of regional plan. *(Regional District Planner)*

Along the same line of thought, one Planner referenced the example of watershed planning, and mentioned the fact that many concepts are interrelated and overlap:

At the local, regional, water utility level, provincial level, most of these concepts are interrelated and overlap. Think of watershed planning. This overlaps with agricultural discussions and practices, which overlaps with land use planning at the local level, which links to how the local community sees the watershed. The same can be said for sensitive ecosystems — location, connectivity, and having discussion about local and regional approaches towards environmental protection. This all translates into the broad community discussions. When the boundaries you deal with don't correspond to local boundaries or areas at the sub-regional or regional scale, it becomes very difficult to act locally and independently. *(Regional District Planner)*

One Academic Planner offered Randall Arendt's ideas of *conservation subdivision* as a concept that needs to be embraced in this context, while in contrast, a Regional District Planner suggested that a conservation subdivision is effectively “a wolf in sheep's clothing” as “it is really just a way of justifying rural sprawl”.

A recurring theme throughout the interviews was communication.

Planning is about communication — it mystifies people. *(Regional District Planner)*

In order to progress, Planners need to listen to, and to hear, the community. Community is fundamentally the driving factor behind planning; as it evolves, changes need to reflect current realities, and Planners also need to develop better communication with other professions.

In the planning worlds we aren't good at working with design worlds. This is something we can improve upon. *(Consultant)*

Improved communication — verbal, nonverbal, interpersonal, intrapersonal, strategic, multifaceted — may provide an informative tool for integrating community design and regional planning — it may also be a result. Other implications for planning, and planners, as a result of better integration of regional planning and community design were broadly identified and ranged from sustainability to regional importance — such as water and environment; clearer guidance

— including appropriate policy implementation and incorporation of community feedback; and ongoing education — formally and informally. Interviewees broadly identified the above-mentioned implications:

Better integration gets us more sustainable regions — one that is more respectful of both human habitats and natural habitats. *(Consultant)*

It [better integration] is very much mindful of the overall Regional Growth Strategy. It guides all the conversations we have every day. *(City Planner)*

Will result in, and require, better training and education of Planners. You have to understand the context — what you are planning, where you are working, where you are planning. *(Municipal Planner)*

May result in a way to do regional planning both bottom-up and top-down at the same time; this could be a hard thing to do. Though plans are integrated, there is still a bit of a disconnect between what something means in a higher-level plan and what it actually means in a local level plan. *(Regional District Planner)*

Should create a space to be able to develop tools and guidance on design that everyone agrees on. *(Regional District Planner)*

Communication and consultation are outcomes of better integration. In order to achieve that, there is more consultation, communication, sharing of plans, development applications, sharing of services, what have you, than there would be otherwise if they were totally siloed. *(Provincial Planner)*

From insights generated via the questions and probes, ‘education’ and ‘communication’ appeared to be the two key aspects most vital for advancement of the profession at this time.

5.2 Interview Outcomes

The interview questions focused on the three main areas discussed in the literature review: the regional planning context, the community design context, and the integration of the two. This process aided in filling in gaps noted in the course of this inquiry.

Regarding the regional planning context, it was found that urban containment is a preferred approach for growth management. Further, interviewees suggested that planning at the

fringe (in-between) is challenging, requires a certain finesse, and must be continually improved upon; this is where planning is typically poor. It was noted that fringe areas are complex, continually changing, and constantly challenging planners to adapt their planning ways. Context was continually highlighted as important; there was definite recognition that *context* will increase connectivity between ‘the regional’ and ‘the local’, while also differentiating these areas from each other. ‘Context’ seemed at times to be a too easy catch-all container, for much that was comparatively unsaid. The ‘regional district’ was the dominant planning authority setting, especially that part of the regional district outside incorporated municipalities; yet, the **unincorporated** context of all the RVCs and their fringe area setting did not seem to register with (most) interviewees. Planning, in a locality context, appeared to come more easily than design, in a community context. Individual RVC contexts did not appear to receive much consideration or commentary, comparatively speaking or otherwise. The dominant context for the interviewees appeared to be RVCs in the abstract, as a collectivity, as a policy bundle.

The community design context did not appear to be immediately understood by interviewees. However, as conversations turned towards placemaking and villaging/village-making (rurally) community design was apparently more easily embraced. A highlight included the realization that placemaking is imperative as part of the creation of an emotional attachment to place. Placemaking was also noted as a way to establish (regional) commonalities while highlighting (community) village distinctiveness. On the flipside, it was found that placemaking must be approached and embraced appropriately and authentically; otherwise, there may be the risk of its exploitative use for façade purposes and/or as merely a marketing-focus.

The integration of community design and regional planning (through mobilization of such concepts as Complete Communities and Agricultural Urbanism) was suggested to be a

function of more overt coordination efforts, to better connect, and to seek more cohesion between these two forms of intervention which are not always well-coordinated nor well-connected. With regional planning more broadly and better understood — compared to community design — it was initially easier for interviewees to discuss regional planning, in a regional district context. In a sense this biased much of the discussion, at the expense of a similar understanding and appreciation of community design. Nevertheless, though community design was (at first) less well understood, the link between the *local* and the *regional* was immediately recognized. Some planners agreed that AU and CC were concepts that could help to better link community design and regional planning; others did not. It was apparently agreed upon that, at a minimum, AU and CC help to generate useful discussion and potentially create further awareness resulting in the prospect of some advancement in the planning/design relationship, through placemaking. In unincorporated fringe area settings in BC regional districts it might also be suggested that this could also translate into a better connection between community governance and planning/design — especially in RVC contexts such as those featured in this study.

As with the literature review and the case study, the interviews provided an opportunity to further the questioning surrounding regional planning, community design, and the bridging of the two. A synthesis of the findings is offered in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 6

SYNTHESIS

6.0 Introduction:

The purpose of this MDP was to investigate regional planning for growth containment in unincorporated rural areas, and more specifically — the place of Complete Communities and Agricultural Urbanism, with placemaking in mind. The main research questions, and the related perceived research problems, considered how regional planners, responsible for unincorporated rural areas in regional district settings, applied growth management strategies; how growth containment was effected; how typically or ostensibly ‘urban’ concepts — Complete Communities and Agricultural Urbanism — may be applicable in rural settings; and how such concepts could potentially help to better link community design (in unincorporated rural village centres) and regional planning (in, for and by a regional district).

The targeted literature review, key informant interviews and case study provided perspectives in particular on the rural realm (at the urban/rural interface) in an urbanizing region, on related growth containment strategizing, and on the regional planning and community design interconnection. The key context was where the rural and the urban intermingle in unincorporated areas — without a municipal government of their own. The literature review revealed the heightened importance of planning in such fringe areas. Planning as placemaking was identified as a key concept potentially linking different settings, embracing shared similarities, but also appropriately highlighting differences. The literature review further suggested that community design and regional planning were rarely considered together, nor considered well-connected (often seeming to be

more poles apart), whereas the case study and interviews revealed perceptions that these ‘poles’ may be more closely aligned — depending on the interpretation. The interviews (geared towards planners with experience at the urban-rural interface) established that it is more difficult to plan effectively in unincorporated rural fringe areas, but also underlined that a more appropriate, more customized, planning was essential in such settings (it could not be simply a variant of urban planning).

The interviews indicated that concepts such as Complete Communities must be redefined to better ‘fit’ unincorporated rural areas in regional district settings. The interviews also indicated a need for greater understanding of Agricultural Urbanism and Community Design — as these two topic areas created the greatest amount of discomfort and disconnect for interviewees.

Reflecting on the inquiry as a whole, undertaking this synthesis — and developing conclusions — has proved to be challenging; there has been much learning in the course of the inquiry, and a sense of much learning still to come — along with an over-riding desire to achieve some closure on the present project. Condensing a vast amount of information — some of it conflicting — into a coherent, concise and context-appropriate synthesis has stretched my not only my abilities as a researcher and writer, but has also taken me out of my comfort zone, and has progressively expanded my understanding of the importance of a ‘planning as placemaking’ perspective, and of the related dimension of community design. These have been a ‘stretch’ — given my initial grounding in regional planning, and related locality planning, from a regional district perspective. The project has taken me into new ‘territory’, and this may also have been the case for many of my interviewees.

One obvious example of this ‘stretching’ was in relation to the exploration of the place of Agricultural Urbanism. As a comparatively new concept in the planning realm, there was limited literature available and interviewees were minimally familiar with it, or attempted to reframe it as something more familiar to themselves, such as urban agriculture. There were similar issues around the understanding of community design, as the majority of the interviewees did not initially connect with topic. For myself, I can now acknowledge that I may have too closely linked community design with ‘local planning’ in attempts to better explain it to interviewees.

My own background has unveiled a distinct fondness for rural settings, having lived in the equivalent of a ‘rural village centre’ in another regional district setting, where the unincorporated status was experienced as a given, and part of the natural order of things; it has therefore been something of a challenge to ‘problematise’ the ‘unincorporated’ aspects of this case study — to single out its significance. When planning is introduced these areas may be treated as localities, local to the region; whereas they are experienced by residents as communities — as places, with the residents being the makers of the place in question. Planning authorities can miss this distinction; a planning as placemaking perspective can correct this, and community design comes more into its own. The ‘design’ aspect picks up on the ‘making’ in placemaking; the place correlates to the community; community design becomes a natural complement to local planning — related, but distinct.

The selection of a primary case study area on central Vancouver Island presented initial opportunities for easy access to information, but also created difficulties later, as I gained employment in the area during the latter part of the study (working for one of the

municipalities in the regional district). Subsequently, I may have treaded more cautiously than originally anticipated due to my newfound employment and emerging professional network. Early on in the process — specifically during the early stages of the literature review — I now realize that I may have operated from a general assumption that ‘the rural’ was comparatively ignored by the literature (in comparison with ‘the urban’), was less well attended to from a planning perspective, and was apt to be misunderstood by many (urban-influenced or urban-privileging) planners. This general assumption has since been largely invalidated. This MDP has been a learning process — not only in the conventional educational sense, but also professionally and personally.

6.1 Discussion — General Findings

In Chapter 1 (Figure 1) a conceptual structure of this MDP was offered. It conveyed the working premises for the study — the framing of an exploration of a better linkage between conventional regional planning (in the context of a regional district’s growth containment strategizing) and emerging notions of community design (associated with a perspective of planning as placemaking). The Regional District’s ‘rural village centres’ — a major plank of the growth containment strategy, were viewed as not simply localities in a regional planning context but also as communities — as places — meriting design consideration; they were potentially opportunities for village-making through community design, that attempted to compensate for their unincorporated status. Particular planning concepts (in this case AU and CC) were introduced as possibilities for forging such a linkage. Complete Communities was an early interest; Agricultural Urbanism was introduced later, as potentially complementary. The placemaking interest

has been underlying from the outset, but became more prominent and more central as the study progressed. This synthesis represents an effort to establish the current state of inter-play of all these components.

6.1.1. Regional Planning & Community Design

From the case study and interviews, it was observed that community design and regional planning appear to be, increasingly, more closely integrated, especially in terms of aspirations among those with a good sense of each, and their inter-relationship. Case study findings indicated that these, often ‘opposites’ (planning and design; region and community), are becoming better linked, indirectly if not directly, and implicitly if not explicitly. Interviews with planners in the RDN case study area suggested there is a desire and drive to continually work towards a more community-based planning approach. It was found that planners with an understanding of multiple processes at different levels (of government, of geographical location, of policy implementation) have a greater understanding and broader perspective on planning. As a result, they are better able to facilitate the integration of community design and regional planning. The linking requires a capacity to hold multiple perspectives simultaneously, as well as a disposition to deal with the dynamics of evolving situations — a developmental or evolutionary, rather than static, perspective. This is essential for operationalising planning as placemaking, in the fullest sense of the term.

6.1.2. Placemaking, Villaging (Village-making) & Growth Containment

The better linking of regional planning and community design was highlighted in terms of the need to better understand the wider context of each, in the urban/rural fringe setting in particular. ‘Rural’ is a sphere separate from, but inter-linked with, its urban counterpart. Unincorporated rural areas in such settings represent an added dimension of complexity. ‘Rural-ness’ — like ‘urban-ness’ — may be highly subjective; it is in part a product of its functional context and its place quality. The place aspect feels fundamental, primary; placemaking is a primal human practice (Wight, 2012). There is an ‘imperative’ element to it — a natural imperativeness, in rural as well as urban settings. My own experience is primarily rural; what I am coming to understand as placemaking is an imperative in my rural experience. It feels natural that planning would want to better align with placemaking.

Placemaking is relatively well articulated in the literature in a general sense, but less so in relation to aspects of planning practice. Place, rather than placemaking, is often the focus of attention — especially ‘sense’ of place, and it is mainly in this respect that it appears to be of increased importance in rural settings (Townsend & Hungerford, 2010; Shibley, Schneekloth and Hovey, 2003). The interviews also supported this (Section 5.1.2). When unincorporated rural areas furnish the operative context, placemaking is of particular relevance, especially placemaking by the people in/of the place. In the absence of a placemaking sensibility, planning often becomes something that is more done to the place, as a mere locality in a larger setting, by a relatively remote authority (such as a regional district) because the place does not have a truly local, community-based, ‘corporate’, government of its own. This changes the terms of the planning relationship;

placemaking calls for a different approach, responsive to the specific rural context. The case study helped to demonstrate the importance of context-sensitivity, and the potential value of a placemaking approach in the context of the rural village centres at the heart of this case study (Section 4.2).

Placemaking has the capacity in this case to be regional or local. Planning as placemaking is clearly very different from, but may include, statutory planning; it transcends — while including — the latter. The Rural Village Centres represent a venue for a particular type of placemaking — village making. Each RVC is a place of sorts (to varying degrees) of ‘place-ness’, depending on the ‘making’ to date. In each case, the absence of a community government of its own obviously limits the ‘making’ that can be achieved by the people in/of each place; some have a longer, deeper and/or wider history of ‘communing’ than others, but a basic limitation or deficiency remains, that ‘planning as placemaking’ can help to address. The rural village centres, while functioning as components of a regional district’s growth strategy, are also ‘places’ where ‘making’ may occur as a form of placemaking as village-making (or villaging); each RVC may then define its place, contextualizing itself within a region. This might be as a comparatively urban (but very small urban) settlement in a mainly rural setting, or as a rural service centre that is mainly rural only in its wider setting context — but which is more urban in its own terms, (or as an urban node with other such urban nodes in a rural region).

The RVCs fit into the larger urban-rural continuum, which is a major concern within the larger growth management context. While the latter can be discussed in general terms, the specific context — location, perceptions, politics, community attitudes — is what mostly determines how policies are implemented, and how successful they

will be. Growth management policies can be rather broad-brush, such as the preferred approach of ‘rural growth management’ being containment, but it is the application context (rural, rural, fringe, urban etc) that shapes the outcomes. A ‘village’ is a natural container for rural region growth; it is also a natural container for communing — in alignment with fundamental rural sensibilities. Planning by design for RVCs supports placemaking as village-making.

Moving along the continuum from purely rural unincorporated areas towards generally more urban municipally-incorporated areas, the urban-rural fringe area begins to loom large. This fringe area is where urban meets rural, where city meets country, and where different ways of life tend to collide. This ‘rural’ fringe furnished the common setting for the RVCs at the centre of this study. In the not ‘so’ distant planning past this context was characterized as “invalidated as a rural environment, without being validated as an urban” (Coleman, 1977, p. 25). This area continues to be particularly complex from a planning perspective; it is continually changing, and intrinsically important for evolving growth management practices. The RVCs in this case study fall largely within a fringe area, broadly-defined; different RVCs fall into different parts of a fringe spectrum: urban fringe, rural fringe, or rural fringe. This differentiation may merit greater consideration in policy articulation terms; the exact fringe context for a particular RVC will dictate which influences predominate — urban, rural, or a mixture/clashing of the two. These RVCs have comparatively limited rurality, mainly because of their urban-rural fringe context. At present, they are essentially in non-urban (but not rural) area(s) that are evolving to more closely identify with an urban area. This contextualizes the suggestion that the Rural Village Centres of the RDN fit into a continuum: RURAL-Rural-rural-

urban-Urban-URBAN. Considering the RVCs as integral pieces of the urban/rural continuum within the Regional District is a step towards developing policy approaches more applicable to these in-between areas. This is also a step towards more widely-accepted recognition that RVCs are not urban OR rural — but rather an intricate combination and balance of both. The RDN's RVCs are *centres* in dual respects: i) centres of the immediate residential population of a designated place (DPL); and/or ii) centres of the wider settled 'rural district' (or Regional District 'sub-region') within which they are situated. This 'district'— or sub-region — dimension of 'centres' seems to be particularly important for some RVCs (e.g. Cedar) and relatively insignificant for others (e.g. Bellevue-Church). Perhaps this 'district' dimension needs to be built more directly into the current RVC policies. For instance, an RVC like Bellevue-Church acts less as a local service centre connected to surrounding 'rural district' of its own, but instead is more connected to and is more reliant upon the wider region — it currently serves as an industrial hub for the central Vancouver Island area, a geographic locale that extends well beyond the Regional District of Nanaimo's jurisdictional area. Juxtapose this with Cedar — a local service centre that can meet the day-to-day needs of residents within (and beyond) its RVC boundary — a place that centres a rural district of its own. Coombs, Cassidy and Errington are other places that centre their own rural districts and function more like a small village (or 'town'). This demonstrates how different particular RVCs can be from one another, while still fitting into different parts of the urban-rural spectrum. If the needs of a Rural Village Centre (effectively functioning as a local service centre) are not sufficiently acknowledged by the Regional District there is the possibility for the residents of a RVC to reconsider its status; they may push for

incorporation of their community as a municipality — as was the case with the District of Lantzville. This suggests that the regional districts which oversee growing rural centres need to be sensitive and responsive to place-specific concerns.

6.1.3. Policies & Approaches

For a rural village centre to be successfully included in a regional planning framework, local plans and regional plans must be coordinated with each other, there must be a clear connection to the specific place, and the relevant political forces must work together cohesively. For AU or CC to be successful, there must be supportive contextualization at the regional and community level. It appeared that planners (or at least those interviewed) were more comfortable working with concepts and policies at a regional level. Therefore, moving forward, it will be critical that community design is weighted as importantly as the broader-scope larger-scale plans.

The interviews indicated that to achieve this balancing there may need to be a more integrated ‘top-down/bottom-up’ approach whereby community design and regional planning are perceived to be valued equally. Partnership is key for plans to be translatable to different contexts. Even well-intentioned policies have unforeseen consequences that can cause conflict in the form of negative outcomes, or which may not be appropriate for the given context. Policies can be localized, as highlighted in the case study with the Cedar design project, but they can also be regional, as demonstrated by the RDN’s regional growth strategy. Other interventions may also be contemplated, such as incorporation of a previous unincorporated area, as occurred in the case of Lantzville. Localized approaches tend to be more easily attainable when the area in question is

incorporated as a municipality — i.e. having their own local government, with a council and an administration responsive to their (and only their) needs. While incorporation as a municipality (rather than being a portion of an unincorporated rural area) has its benefits (more directly associated with a council of several elected officials) it may also have its challenges — such as responding to the demands of the community members in a cost-effective and time-sensitive manner. With tax rates typically rising upon incorporation — as was the case in the District of Lantzville — incorporation often brings with it increased political pressures. Politics is inherent to planning. The best, most well-intentioned policies, plans and measures can be derailed, ignored, or subverted — depending on the politics and related pressures at the time a decision has to be made. Case study findings suggested that in some cases senior level government policies can mitigate problematic local political pressures. For instance, British Columbia's Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) offers a model in which provincial legislation is administered through a body at arms-length from the local governments and regional districts — alleviating some otherwise potentially problematic local development politics.

AU and CC were introduced and discussed as a source of policies and approaches that might help to better link regional planning and community design. AU and CC provided platforms for exploring linking possibilities, in association with the 'planning as placemaking' perspective. It was noted, through the lenses of AU and CC, that adopting a policy, regardless of the level of community consultation and support, is significantly easier than enacting that policy. For a regional policy to be acted upon, and connected to the community design context, it must be readily translatable in these terms — perhaps

through the medium of intermediary perspectives such as CC and AU — appropriately adjusted in this case for each of the RDN's RVCs.

6.1.4 Initial Thoughts

It appears the planning profession is moving towards embracing a continuum where regional planning and community design are more closely linked, a better planning/design system, ranging across a series of forms and scales. While the literature implies that these spheres are more dissimilar than similar, the perceptions of interviewees suggested otherwise; but it was not always clear that community design was well understood, especially in terms of being different from 'local planning'. Community design did not appear to 'land' as well as regional planning with many of the interview participants. Even in casual 'planning office talk' when asked about my MDP topic, the terminology of 'community design' was often met with blank stares and a request for clarification. With the benefit of hindsight, I would have been better off starting the interview process with general discussions about key terms that, looking back now, could have benefited from further defining, explanation and clarification. Similar experiences occurred with the concept of Agricultural Urbanism.

From the outset this MDP has mobilised the concept of AU as positive rather than problematic; it intrinsically embraces the kind of contradictions that are readily encountered in urban/rural-fringe settings especially. For some interviewees, the 'urbanism' aspect grated somewhat, given the underlying desire to privilege the rural, and there was some interest in the potentially alternative perspective of the 'new ruralism'. Based on the case study and the precedents, it became evident that the meshing of

agricultural and urban was an unavoidable consideration. However, based on the interviews, the ‘urbanism’ aspect of AU *turned off* planners who worked in and with rural areas; they felt, at first glance, that this concept did not apply to them. Thus, the questioning exploring Community Design and Agricultural Urbanism represented challenges for several interviewees. However, this tension also provided some openings for a conversation around where planning may be headed, and how it may get there — especially in urban/rural fringe contexts.

The choice of terminology, despite attempts at some clear definition in the visual summary piece (associated with the interview guide), generated multiple perceptions and connotations. Planners applied the terminology to their preferred context and/or within the realm of their own experience and understanding. For instance, the terminology relating to ‘complete’ with respect to ‘communities’ was summarized for interviewees as a “given diverse area where one can live, work, and play and have the majority of day-to-day needs met”. However, ‘complete’ was interpreted in multiple different ways (e.g. ‘finished’, ‘evolving’ etc) at multiple different scales (local, regional, ‘catchments’/districts). ‘Complete’, in terms of relationship to the RDN’s ‘rural village centres’, requires redefining to fit this more regional context.

Based on this research, two possible approaches have emerged. The first considers looking beyond the immediate confines or environs of the RVC (i.e. its built-up area) to include surrounding affiliated (‘catchment’ or ‘district’) territory as the context for assessing/achieving ‘complete’. It may also be necessary to consider an even broader (regional) scale, to reach ‘completeness’ regionally rather than locally (by regarding a region as ‘a community of communities’). The second approach involves adjusting the

definition of completeness to incorporate aspects of scale, size, and context appropriate for the rural realm. Perhaps such ‘completeness’ is always qualified, as a moving target of sorts — a planning/design outcome that is valued as ‘always complete, but never finished’ (Quayle et al). This could be the underlying goal for any placemaking effort, locally or regionally. For meaningful terminology to *take hold* in more than one context, it must be well understood, but also be flexible enough to be applicable in rural and urban environments — and all areas in-between.

6.2 Main Outcomes

The first portion of this chapter has discussed the MDP thus far in relation to the conceptual structure offered in Chapter 1 (Figure 1). This initial visual suggested there may be a linkage between the comparative polar opposites of regional planning and community design, and that a ‘planning as placemaking’ perspective may play a key role in better linking these realms, including (urban) village-making as a form of placemaking. The concepts of Complete Communities and Agricultural Urbanism were also introduced as potentially bridging concepts.

Figure 8 (below) offers a reworking of the initial conceptual structure, as there is now a better understanding of the interrelationship between community design and regional planning — they are not so much polar opposites as overlapping dualities. They are now perceived as part of the same overall realm sharing similar goals and outcomes, but through different means. Much of the connection can potentially be made through mobilisation of adapted perspectives on new organizing themes encompassing planning and design: Complete Communities and Agricultural Urbanism.

Knowledge and awareness gaps surrounding AU have begun to be filled in; planners previously unaware/unfamiliar with the topic have been introduced to it, initial discussions have been sparked, and (hopefully) there is now more of an opening, moving forward, to formally adopt AU across the urban/rural planning spectrum. It appears to be a very relevant policy container for strategizing growth containment and rural area conservation, in an active urban/rural fringe planning context. Similarly, in the Complete Communities context, considerations around ‘complete’/‘completeness’ have been generated, including some sense of how this can/should be adapted to a variety of environments and scales — including referencing ‘completeness’ in terms of both ‘a community of communities’ at the region-scale, or as ‘community’ on a more localized community-scale.

AU and CC offer adaptability and the possibility of transference to a range of realms of urban, rural and — especially — in-between. Also, the importance of placemaking in the sense of villaging/villagemaking in the RVC context has become clearer — how this reflects the urban/rural symbiosis characteristic of fringe settings.

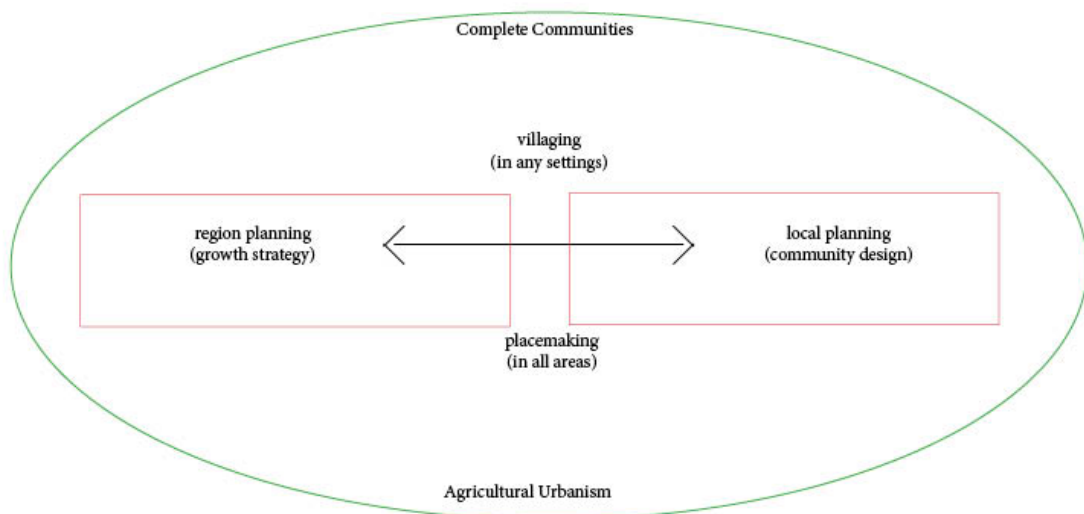


Figure 8. Visual summary of project learnings

From this experience, the RDN's Rural Village Centres appear to fall into two distinct groupings: *Rural District Village Centres* (RDVC) and *Country Residential Estate Districts* (CRED). RDVCs (Cedar, Bowser, Cassidy, Coombs) comprise local scale urban/rural intermingling of the 'centre' and the 'district' it centres; they have appeared to establish themselves organically. CREDs tend to be the more recent large-scale subdivisions, established as a result of development activities (Fairwinds, Schooner Cove, Qualicum River Estates). RDVCs have 'communing' and community design occurring within the centre, and between the centre and its district. In the CREDs there is probably less such communing going on — except perhaps between immediate neighbours. The 'centres' of the RDVCs are more mixed-use, and have more of a district 'service centre' quality — albeit as comparatively low-order service centres in the overall regional system of service centres. CREDs are much more homogeneous single-use districts, served more by other larger centres (such as Nanaimo), and with little or no wider district-serving functions/facilities of their own.

Based on the discussion in the first half of this chapter and considerations of the reworked conceptual structure (noted in Figure 8: Visual summary of the project learnings) three main areas of new insights have been identified: i) balancing specifics and generalities; ii) gradually moving towards improved integration of regional planning and community design; and iii) the continual evolution of urban/rural fringe planning in the context of regional planning for growth containment in unincorporated rural communities.

6.2.1 Balancing Specifics and Generalities

Terminology and context matter where urban/rural fringe planning is concerned, especially the need for a balanced consideration of specifics and generalities. It seems to be about an overall (general) balancing of several (specific) ‘balancing acts’: a balance of the local and the regional; districts (sub-regions) and centres (settlement sites/concentrations); the permissive (flexibly managing change) and the restrictive (containing growth); and the purely rural and the purely urban — and everything in-between.

While this MDP has focused on the setting of urban/rural fringe planning, there has been a deliberate bias in favour of consideration of the ‘rural’ in the urban/rural (to remedy the perceived imbalance in the literature, which seems to implicitly or explicitly favour the ‘urban’). Planning in (unincorporated) rural areas close to (incorporated) urban centres — the focus of this research — involves attempts to apply appropriate growth management strategies (a generality) within the context of varying/individual rural interests (specifics), such as the desire to preserve open/green space and emphasize more of a community ‘feel’ (the character or ‘persona’ of a place). This balancing act between regional and local has been helped by the framing, and reframing, of different concepts for different contexts, such as a particular ‘villaging’ interest, through village-making, as a form of placemaking — adapting current ‘urban village’ thinking (within urban centres) to ‘rural village’ formulations (within rural districts). Planning in such areas takes on the metaphor of a teeter-totter (an alternating ‘give and take’, or ‘to and fro’ — helping one another) aiming towards a better integration of regional planning and community design.

6.2.2 Towards Improved Integration of Regional Planning & Community Design

Regional planning for (unincorporated) rural areas on the fringes of (incorporated) urban areas, the pursuit of more complete communities in rural (fringe) settings, and the better bridging of regional planning and community design share the common goal of improved integration. Integration arises slowly, deliberately and incrementally as each planning process element (consultation, policy, bylaw, plan) contributes further towards the desired more integrative result. For day-to-day planning practice the implications are unknown, but are speculated to have a positive outcome on planning processes and outcomes.

Based on this research, those responsible (planners, community members, politicians) for the coordination of regional planning and community design are learning that synergies and tradeoffs differ along the urban-fringe-rural spectrum. A series of checks and balances among planners — and those associated with the planning profession — help to guide this iterative integration process.

6.2.3 The changing sphere of urban/rural fringe planning

It has been the experience of this practicum that urban/rural fringe planning is a very dynamic arena of planning, continuously in flux. Planning in unincorporated rural areas in such fringe settings, especially in emerging settlement centres, is particularly dynamic and full of impulses to evolve, change and adapt; perhaps as a response to more discriminating fringe management approaches; perhaps in response to increased priority given to the non-urban realm. Planning here is becoming increasingly complex, involving greater numbers of increasingly diverse stakeholders, with wide-reaching outcomes

across and beyond established boundaries. The changing sphere of urban/rural fringe planning is demanding more attention; and when appropriate attention is given there is the potential for residents of Rural Village Centres want to and incorporate as their own municipal entity — as was the case with the District of Lantzville.

Lantzville was one of the original RDN Rural Village Centres; it had the capacity to serve the district around it, as well as the needs of its immediate ‘centre’. Lantzville functions as a ‘market-place’ for some of the surrounding areas as well as a ‘service-centre’. This allowed for a shift from an unincorporated RVC to incorporated municipality — satisfying the desire of many residents of Lantzville to more fully ‘govern’ themselves. Incorporation has allowed for more localized approaches within this new(er) municipality; now they have the basic advantage of a local government — and a council and an administration — of their own.

Rural village centres (as discussed in the case study experience of Chapter 4) provide a place for discussion — and learning — on the challenging ‘in-between’ planning context of urbanizing centres on the rural fringe, ‘centres’ without a local government of their own. This may potentially be the route to more organized, incorporated status as recently demonstrated by Lantzville.

This urban/rural/fringe realm of planning creates challenges, but also offers opportunities — for planning and planners. There is an opportunity to bring greater awareness and emphasis to planning ‘the in-between’: the area that is not quite ‘urban’ but is no longer purely rural. Urban/rural fringe places — to the extent that such places can be ‘made’ — are changing, and planning needs to change with it — especially in regard to making room for more community design, especially in unincorporated

communities in need of more community capacity-building. This is an opening for ‘planning as placemaking’.

6.3 Synthesis

This practicum has been a learning process - and in many ways something of a re-learning process on a personal level. I have learned more about what I consider ‘rural’ compared to what others consider ‘rural’; personal connotations and general understandings of the term drastically alter perceptions and definitions. I have learned that planners in different sectors of planning view ‘planning’ differently —for instance, regional planners view placemaking differently from planners who tend to focus primarily on neighbourhood or locality planning. I have also learned that the literature and perceptions of reality are not always well-aligned — but perhaps I was naive to think they might align. This study has demonstrated that rural is more than the opposite of the urban; rather, it is a crucial piece within a planning continuum that must embrace many scales and contexts. In this case study context it is clear that strategies and approaches must be framed for the specific applicable urban-fringe-rural context (unincorporated ‘centres’, in rural districts coming under increasingly ‘urban’ influences). Applicable concepts - new, old, or reworked - must be continually questioned — critically and appreciatively — to help advance planning as a discipline and profession, attempting to be of better service in such settings. Planning needs to grow and develop as much as the growth and development it is intended to address. This project has indicated the possible value in growing a view of planning as placemaking — at all scales, and for planning to develop in the direction of a greater embrace of design, especially community design.

6.3.1 Revisiting the Research Questions

This study has focused primarily on the rural/urban interface in a regional planning context. This type of planning is gaining greater acceptance, importance and emphasis in academic, professional, and practicing planning spheres (Douglas, 2010). Anticipating a continuation of this trend, this MDP has attempted to contribute to the field, by exploring specific research questions. A revisiting of the research questions (originally presented in Chapter 1) is discussed below.

1. *How do regional planners, with a responsibility for planning in rural areas on the fringes of urban areas, apply appropriate growth management strategies? How is growth containment best effected? How is the urban and the rural best integrated to harness the best of each?*

The intent of this question was to encourage consideration of the particular challenges of regional planners, in regional district settings, to be more than ‘regional planners’ in relation to particular unincorporated localities — outside incorporated urban centres — administered by the regional districts. This takes regional planners into the realms of localities, some of which may take the form of communities — with a strong identity, but without a matching local government of their own. This invokes somewhat specialized urban/rural fringe planning, and a potential reframing of the regional district setting - as a ‘community of communities’, and a reframing of sub-regions as rural districts, some with ‘centres’ taking on a small urban form (village).

There was an interest in considering urban and rural as inter-related parts of the same continuum (instead of purely urban *or* purely rural); more gradations of different mixes or ‘interminglings’ of urban and rural. Through this research, especially from interviewing planners planning in rural and rural/urban fringe areas, it became apparent that there is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach for growth management strategies in such

contexts. Containment practices, such as urban growth boundaries and village centre designations, were the most common growth management strategy noted.

The literature reviewed suggested that though rural planning typically may have been over-shadowed by its urban planning counterpart, the importance of rural planning is increasing — especially as urban approaches are beginning to be re-worked in non-urban environments, and as rural planning and regional planning evolve towards increased levels of integration, especially in urban/rural fringe contexts. Through this research, planners' experiences with rural planning, specifically in the context of unincorporated rural areas, and village-form 'centres' of such rural districts, are highlighted as varied, context-specific and as subject to a continual learning process. Perhaps this is because 'rural' can be viewed through many different lenses, with multiple different definitions and connotations of 'rural'. This rural lens offers a different perspective on planning — one that is more integrative, all-encompassing, and end-use friendly — which might help to evolve and advance the profession. This seems to involve a form of planning as placemaking, with a more natural inclusive consideration of community design, as a complement to local and regional planning.

In terms of integration to best harness the urban and the rural, the literature and interview findings suggest that it is a balancing act: a give and take; a context-loaded, area-appropriate, specifics-honouring approach. This helps to create a more comprehensively respectful planning realm - where rural and urban are equally valued, jointly considered and fully integrated. Planners and planning often seek to do more with less, placing a heightened importance on more finely appreciating the multiple realms of

planning, and how these manifest in particular contexts — such as the urban/rural fringe, where complexity is perhaps most pronounced.

2. *How can Complete Communities be applied and framed for rural settings? Is there a place for Agricultural Urbanism in such a context? What is the place of community design in regional planning?*

This question sought to shed light on the currently popular, typically urban, concept of Complete Communities and how it could be applied in more rural settings. A related goal was to further discussions around Agricultural Urbanism. The premises around CC and AU were associated with an interest in the place of placemaking at different scales (regional/sub-regional, district/community) and were intended to aid the pursuit of better connections between community design (of site-specifics) and regional planning (of growth strategizing).

Interviewees were of different minds on the concept of ‘rural village centre’ as ‘complete communities’. The necessity of a redefining and rethinking of ‘complete’ was highlighted, before this typically urban concept might fit a non-urban setting — even though, arguably, the rural village centre settings were ostensibly more ‘urban’ than ‘rural’. Interviewees questioned interpretations of ‘rural’, mirroring what was found in the literature (Coleman, 1977; Quayle, 1977; Daniels, 1999). The ‘rural’ was a point of conjecture and contestation — much more than the ‘urban’.

Agricultural Urbanism was noted as a hunch of sorts that was applicable, and present, in both urban and rural settings; it seemed especially relevant as a philosophical and practical framing of urban/rural fringe planning. To the extent that it registers and resonates at the present time, it seemed intrinsic to current rural planning practice — especially where agricultural pursuits were featured in the rural economies (and in a

region such as the RDN the concept of AU was felt to be easily extendable to include silvi-cultural pursuits in more forest-dominated rural areas, or aqua-cultural pursuits in more marine-dominated areas). In the more urban and regional contexts AU also provides important linkages around food systems and food security issues; it is associated in some urban areas with ‘municipally supported agriculture’, but AU is about more than simply ‘urban agriculture’. It can also bring a useful sense of ordering and phasing to the often chaotic and confusing urban/rural fringe planning context.

However, it must be acknowledged — based on the interview research here especially — that at present relatively few planning interests explicitly use or embrace this terminology, in the rural context especially, largely because there is little knowledge or understanding of it so far. It is more in the realms of promise and potential, than practical application, at the present time, but it could certainly be part of a more mature, better developed approach to planning, in the urban/rural fringe especially. However, there should be no doubting the challenges involved in such a change in perspective; it will require a change in mindset, a more open mindset.

While it was determined that most interviewed planners were not aware of AU (or not aware enough to be prepared to comment), there appeared to be, among some, a palpable distaste for the ‘urbanism’ in the term, when questioned about applicability in rural settings. Perhaps this could be interpreted as a reactionary view of urbanism in general, among planners who more greatly value a ruralism of sorts. A ‘coming to better terms’ with the concept seems essential for its serious pursuit. Based on my own struggle — as someone with an acknowledged rural bias, and still coming to terms with AU, it seems to be a new concept worth exploring in a more welcoming way; AU may be the urban-

appropriate re-packaging of a comparatively natural practice/emphasis in rural areas.

‘Rural’ and ‘Agricultural’ have always been closely associated; ‘urban’ and ‘agricultural’ much less so — at least in modern times. AU spans both contexts, blueprinting a transect planning approach that stretches from the most purely urban to the most purely rural, with considerable design detail consideration as well as provisions for a dynamic planning approach, appropriate for particular parts of the transect at particular times.

The terminology of community design sparked some heated discussions as well, often, it seemed, through an assumed linking with ‘*urban* design’ principles and preferences. Some interviewees may have been responding from their own preferences or biases — in this case taking the form of relatively ‘anti-urban’ sentiments and viewing design mostly in terms of urban architectural design (rather than community design) terms. While this surfacing of potential biases or perception foci was not the intent of this area of questioning of interviewees, the responses did yield further discussion points, generating a variety of viewpoints and outcomes. Community design, felt by some to be synonymous with local planning (but viewed as quite different as a premise of this research), was nevertheless noted as a key aspect of regional planning - and vice versa, as there was a sense that ‘each informs the other’. Simply put — it was felt that one may not comprehensively exist without the other. The question seems to be how to manifest this mutual importance in practice, and this is where some variant or variants of ‘complete communities’ may play a role, as well as greater regard for ‘agricultural urbanism’ as a broader framing for urban/rural fringe/overlap planning at least. There seems to be a place for these concepts, especially within a broader ‘planning as placemaking’ reframing.

3. *How might regional planning and community design be better bridged in rural growth containment contexts? What are the implications for planners and planning?*

The underlying problem here was viewed in terms of how, in practice, to better integrate regional planning (in rural settings) and community design (for comparatively ‘urban’ villages in such rural settings) especially by mobilizing the concept of Agricultural Urbanism, alongside some finessing of the concept of Complete Communities, via a ‘planning as placemaking’ approach. The operative sub-questions involved: How desirable is such an integration of planning and design, region and community? How feasible is such a mobilization of concepts such as AU, CC and placemaking? What alternatives or critiques might merit consideration? And what might all this mean for planners and planning in such settings, especially for regional (district) planners, with a responsibility to service not only the regional district as a whole but also particular unincorporated communities in particular rural districts (sub-regions), within a very dynamic urban/rural fringe?

With literature apparently inferring, if not directly suggesting, a gap between regional planning and community design, part of the focus of this research question was exploring how concepts such as AU, CC and placemaking could be used as a potential bridge — to help better inter-relate these potential polar-opposite concepts (region and community; planning and design). Through the case study — focused on the RDN/RVC policies, in a growth containment context — it was sensed that regional planning and community design are at least beginning to be better connected, and thus ‘integrated’, in this context. This seemed best demonstrated by the recent Cedar Main Street Design Project, reflecting a belief that growth management needs — above all else — to be context-

specific; planning approaches applicable in a large complex city are not necessarily applicable in a hamlet or small rural village (but design approaches, sensitive to community contexts, could be applicable in both settings, especially with a placemaking orientation to the overall planning). More experience with such community-specific design projects could help elaborate the planning/design means to better bridge regional planning and community design, especially for unincorporated rural areas on the fringes of inexorably urbanizing regions, and to better ‘fit’ into the regional planning context of growth containment strategizing. This is an area that clearly requires further research, but hopefully the present research has helped to point some of the way.

The implications of better bridging, or integrating, regional planning and community design include both difficulties and opportunities for planning, and planners — in terms of how planning is conceived, and how planners profess. These are further discussed in Chapter 7.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS

7.1 Overview

This practicum has investigated regional planning for growth containment in unincorporated rural areas — areas not organized as a municipality, nor part of any formal town or city. Compared to their more formally urban and municipally-organized neighbours, these areas are often at the edge of conventional planning as well as on the urbanizing edge geographically; have generally been subject to minimal formal planning intervention; and have yet to experience much intervention as community design. Regional growth strategizing has presented an opportunity, and a mechanism by which growth containment can be viewed as bringing more planning and design to the unincorporated rural areas context — and this practicum has begun to investigate this concept.

7.2 Reflections

Looking back at the research completed in this MDP, I am also looking to the future and thinking about how this all fits into planning. Knowing what I know now, I have identified aspects I would now do differently. Discussion of ‘rural/urban’ and how RVCs fit (or did not fit) into such contexts was an underlying theme of this project, with community design and regional planning — and the ‘in-between’, furnishing the scope - and the ends — both literally and figuratively. Implications, perceived areas of improvement, and project recommendations are featured in this final concluding chapter.

7.2.1 Implications for Planning and Planners

This practicum has explored regional planning for growth containment in unincorporated rural areas, particularly in the urban/rural fringe of rapidly urbanizing regions, where planners based in a regional district have to balance managing urban growth and preserving rural landscapes. In particular, they have to try to be of service to RVCs that do not have local governments of their own, and which have only varying degrees of community governance capacity. They need to take guidance from general policies, and generalized political direction (one elected representative for a whole electoral area which might contain several RVC)s. A planner in a regional district setting, dealing with an individual RVC or many RVCs, has to operate in a comparative vacuum, often inadvertently if not necessarily privileging the ‘Regional District’ before the ‘Rural Village Centre’. An underlying goal of this research was to gain a better understanding of the rural realm of planning in general, and urban/rural fringe area planning in particular — specifically in the context of unincorporated rural communities. The RDN RVC case study focus has provided the particular real-world setting for exploring these issues, and for a first-cut assessment of the implications for planning and planners

With planning as placemaking in mind, there was interest in investigating the place of Complete Communities and Agricultural Urbanism in this setting. Might these be conducive integrative themes, helping to better integrate regional planning and community design — two activities often premised as poles apart? This research indicates that rural planning — like the rural realm generally - is changing; it is becoming more complex, involving greater numbers of stakeholders, with diverse

backgrounds and more pointed location-specific interests. Based on this research, it is apparent that most rural residents are not as tied to the land, or agriculturally-dependent, as has been the case in the past. In many cases the newer residents are city/urban imports with some city/urban expectations, albeit hoping for some preservation of the original rural characteristics that had a foundational appeal for them. The planning profession will be expected to respond to this changing rural landscape through appropriate policy adoption, and redefining old notions of ‘rural’ to better fit new specific contexts, especially the dynamics encountered in today’s urban/rural fringe. The profession’s response will also need to translate this into appropriate processes. To accomplish this, it appears that ‘planning as placemaking’ will need to be better embraced, better understood, and better implemented by existing planning bodies — in this case, to allow ‘rural (district) village centres’ to flourish.

The research also suggests that planning and planners may need to re-think how they might define ‘complete’ in the rural realm. The commonly accepted definition of complete community — as a place where one can live, work, play, learn, and live — will require revising. Questions such as ‘what exactly does *complete* mean?’ and ‘how is *complete* different in an urban village compared to a rural village?’ will need to be further explored. How does a rural village *fit* the commonly accepted definition of ‘complete’ and what kind of re-definition is needed. There will also need to be more careful consideration for how ‘complete communities’ fits the rural context, if indeed it should. Concepts typically only applied in urban villages (in cities) will need to be examined for attributes that might be transplanted into rural settings where some urban-type concentrations are forming. Urban villages (in city settings) are a more recent planning

innovation, while villages have been always been traditionally associated with ‘rural’ settings. The ‘rural village centre’ tries to capitalize on both successful ‘urban village’ attributes as well as the traditional ‘village’ connotations, typically associated with low-order service centres in rural districts.

Though the literature review led to the inference of community design and regional planning as polar opposites, the case study suggested that this is not necessarily current reality — though may have been so for much of the time up to the recent present. If community design and regional planning are to be better integrated in an ongoing fashion, what challenges may have to be overcome? Will improved integration result in better plans, or a better overall system of planning and design, and development control? Or will it result in undue ‘spreading’ of limited resources, with neither the regional or the local spheres being well-enough attended to, leaving neither interest fully satisfied? Should there always be separate and functionally-distinct champions of each, or is there a need for more championing of the integration? To respond to these questions, planners will need to commit to ongoing learning, and re-learning, of planning practices and approaches — with an openness to new concepts and perspectives. The associated planning systems will have to be adjusted accordingly. Plans will need to leave room for ongoing adaptation, but will need to balance this with clear policy direction. Planning will need to broaden its focus, while at the same time sharpening its capacity to accommodate a wide range of specifics.

7.2.2 Possible Improvement Areas

Hindsight is a luxury. If this project was being initiated today, there would be a concern with three primary areas of improvement: clarified terminology, a simplified yet deepened literature review, and a greater critical deconstructive focus on the constitutive elements of the central concept/s i.e ‘rural’ ‘village’ ‘centre’.

Clarified Definition of Key Terms: Terminology interpretations were found to be an asset and a detriment to this project. Though summaries of important terms were provided to interviewees early in the process, in the form of a visual context summary (found in Appendix 2b), there were still multiple interpretations offered by interviewees. Differing definitions provided insight on each planner’s comfort level, working context and background knowledge — all of which generated richer discussion and helped to round out this project. However, when trying to specifically address a particular term — such as Agricultural Urbanism, community design, Complete Communities, or placemaking — the multiple, varying perspectives created difficulties in achieving responses that were fully applicable to the project context. Thus, if this project were to be re-launched today, there would be a more targeted approach to clarifying definitions — and a seeking of more common understanding of these definitions — during the actual interview process.

More Targeted and More Intensive Literature Review: This is a critique of this MDP but is also probably a critique of MDPs in general, at this stage. The literature review is intended to provide theoretical underpinnings and to help develop appropriate frameworks for pursuing the research. Significant amounts of material have been covered, referenced and included as backing for this practicum. In some cases I feel

there may have been too much going on — as there has been interest in community design, regional planning, complete communities, agricultural urbanism, and placemaking. At the same time, not enough emphasis or focus may have been given to an individual area. As the literature review provides a basis for discussion, there is a need for it to be broad and all-encompassing while at the same time addressing project contexts and specifics. There is a balancing act challenge — of providing a rationale for the research, and the particular approach, as well as investigating the specified research questions, and related research problems. If this project were to be repeated with similar literature review research areas, deeper research on a few key areas — such as AU or CC independently — would potentially be of benefit; particularly AU as this is an emerging planning concept, still to embed in conventional planning practice.

Greater Focus on the Concept of Rural Village Centres: While the concept of a (rural) village centre was considered at length, in both urban and rural contexts, in the future there would be greater emphasis on this concept applied specifically to the ‘in-between’ and ‘mixed-bag’ qualities (and contexts) of RVCs.

Rural village centres (at least in the case study experience) provide a place for discussion — and learning — on the challenging ‘in-between’ planning context of urbanizing centres on the rural fringe, ‘centres’ without a local government of their own — though some potentially en route to more organized, incorporated status (the path of Lantzville in the recent past). The case study offered a unique chance to review the role, function, and fit of RVCs in an unincorporated but urbanizing, community governance (rather than municipal government) context. It therefore also offered an opportunity to

explore the local/municipal government context versus a community governance context, and consider how more attention to community design (rather than simply ‘local planning’) may help to build community governance capacity; ‘local planning’ mainly helps to extend the scope of regional district administration, and a ‘planning for’ disposition, whereas a community governance concern involves a ‘planning with’ and ‘planning by’ disposition, especially where community design is valued .

With other areas (of BC and Canada) similarly challenged in planning for urban/rural fringe areas, via growth management techniques, it would be useful to have achieved greater documentation, focus, review, and critique on the current reality of rural village centres - as experienced in the Regional District of Nanaimo. For example, it is now clear that the current RVCs are a very ‘mixed-bag’ of forms and functions, some centering a wider rural district that helps to ‘round out’ a centre (potentially making it more ‘complete’), while others seem to centre only themselves, with limited wider district relations, but linking more to the wider region - contributing more to completeness of the region, as a community of communities. With more of a focus on individual RVCs (rather than the RDN’s RVC policies) it is anticipated that some differentiation might be contemplated, underpinning more refined policy-making.

For example, by adding the ‘district’ context, it is possible to identify some ‘centres’ that might be better regarded - and planned — as ‘Rural *District* Village Centres’ (Bowser, Coombs, Errington, Cedar etc) while others appear to be more ‘Country Residential Estate Districts’ (Fairwinds, Schooner Cove etc), with much less of a ‘centre’ presence. One is more mixed-use and multi-dimensional; the other is more single-use and mono-dimensional. One is part of a mini-region (a sub-regional district)

that it helps to define; the other is more oriented to the wider region and/or its main urban centre. More in-depth RVC-by-RVC consideration may yield further such differentiation, through greater discernment.

7.3 Recommendations

This MDP has explored several concepts in combination, as part of an interest in advancing understanding of particular forms of regional planning — sometimes it seems from a more theoretical stance, with potential ‘thesis’ implications. However, it has mainly been approached as a practicum, with a particular constituency and policy context in mind, namely, the RDN, its RGS, and the RVC policies. The following recommendations are presented with this latter practicum orientation in mind, beginning with a narrow focus on the RDN/RGS/RVCs, followed by more general recommendations, closing with recommendations relating to planning education and future research.

7.3.1 The RDN RVCs Experience

A case study of a particular policy/strategy of the Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) grounded this practicum. The RDN comprises incorporated urban municipalities *and* unincorporated rural areas — where it was thought that complete communities, agricultural urbanism, placemaking, and the integration of regional planning and community design, could be usefully explored. The RDN has been a leader in BC in terms of regional growth strategies in non-metropolitan areas (i.e. outside the Vancouver and Victoria regions). It has afforded a particularly rich opportunity for considering

regional planning as growth strategizing, and its non-metropolitan character has facilitated a particular interest in the rural dimensions of such planning and strategizing. The regional planning and growth strategizing has continued to evolve over the years, and it is reasonable to anticipate further evolution, especially as a result of current studies and projects (e.g. Cedar Main Street Design Project; Agricultural Area Plan; Alternative Forms of Rural Development; Rural Village Centres Study) The following recommendations — for the RDN’s consideration — have been developed with this context in mind.

Rural (Region/District) Growth Management - Regional Planners in the Regional District of Nanaimo have the responsibility of planning the fringe of large urban centres, such as the City of Nanaimo, City of Parksville, and the Town of Qualicum Beach (and to a lesser extent, the District of Lantzville), while also being responsible for implementing appropriate planning techniques in multiple, diverse, individually-unique urban/rural fringe areas. In the RDN case, around the City of Nanaimo, growth containment was identified as the most appropriate growth management strategy, best effected through the adoption of policies establishing designated Rural Village Centres (RVCs). While the ‘urban village’ concept is well understood and commonly applied in urban settings, in the case of the RDN, ‘rural villages’ have yet to receive the same distinction, documentation and acceptance as their more urban counterparts. That being said, the RDN Rural Village Centres are recognized as being different from the dominant ‘urban centres’ (all of which happen to be incorporated municipalities); the RVCs are situated in predominantly rural settings, and (to varying degree) serve their rural surrounds as well as their own ‘village’

residents. These RVCs are not a ‘one-stop-shop’ location, but more low-order, small, district service centres — at best. They are intended (ideally) to be a well-connected, cohesive, community-centric place where some daily needs can be met. These centres could be viewed as intending to bring some urban flourishes into rural areas, but at a scale that does not unduly impact the overall rural character in a negative way. While the RVCs have been accorded greater importance and more explicit policy direction in the most recent Regional Growth Strategy, there has yet to be a comprehensive evaluation as to how these RVCs are faring — and whether they are achieving intended policy outcomes. It may be advantageous to establish a series of benchmarks, for evaluative and monitoring purposes, to facilitate sound, timely policy development — regardless of the political climate or local government fiscal situation. This could include, for example, potential policy refinement to take account of the particular district settings raised earlier — the distinction between Rural District Village Centres and Country Residential Estate Districts — or similar such further differentiation and discernment.

Complete Communities and Agricultural Urbanism - As previously noted, the intention of Rural Village Centres is to provide for *some* urban form/type experiences in what are expected to remain predominantly rural surrounds, but at a scale and level appropriate to the given rural setting. The RDN is in the process of determining how ‘complete communities’ can be framed for rural setting application. The RDN has also committed recently to an Agricultural Areas Plan. Earlier, it undertook an inventory of the Rural Village Centres, (RDN, 2012) and (with the aid of a consultant) is investigating alternative forms of rural development (IPS & Gemella, 2012). Further, it is currently in

the process of a Rural Village Centres Study of its own, to help determine which RVCs have the greatest potential for evolving into mixed-use centres. The RDN is clearly moving towards an improved understanding of, and a greater commitment to, the rural settings in general and the Rural Village Centres in particular.

In support of agriculture, the Regional District of Nanaimo has recently invested in an Agricultural Area Plan (AAP) featuring local histories, the importance of food security and food systems planning, and identifying niches for agri-related activities. While the AAP has not included any explicit consideration of Agricultural Urbanism, this Plan appears to be following principles and practices of AU without formally framing it in such a way (discussed in Section 4.3). This MDP has indicated that there is a place for Agricultural Urbanism in such rural contexts — especially in urban/rural fringe planning, but the terminology and branding of AU to date have precluded its formal injection into many planning documents — including, it seems, the AAP. A question still remains, if AU should be formally recognized and incorporated, given that current realities are seemingly reflective of its principles. The AU transect, for example, spans the urban/rural fringe — making it very applicable to the context of this MDP but it remains to be seen if it will be more formally applied and enacted. It may emerge as the overall policy arena evolves, as its attributes — in combination with other themes discussed here — become more discernible.

In the RDN (in recent times, and in a particular context) community design has come to be highly valued (perhaps this is also on the horizon for AU). A prime concern of this MDP has been a better integration of regional planning and community design, but this has also had to contend with the perceived close linkage — for planning practitioners - of

local planning and community design (often they seemed to be regarded or treated as interchangeable, but with a preference for the ‘local planning’ reference). It will probably be a challenge for the RDN, as it has been throughout this project, to carefully discriminate between the two terms — and the intervention they represent — in future practice. The dominant ‘culture’ in the RDN at the present time is very planning-oriented, with design being very secondary; the culture is very regional in orientation, rather than local — all of which is possibly quite understandable in a ‘Regional District’ context. The RDN faces the challenge of positively differentiating regional planning and community design, and improving their integration. As mentioned on several occasions earlier, if the RDN ‘culture’ was more comfortably behind a ‘planning as placemaking’ approach, the design piece might come more naturally. This perspective would regard the RVCs as not simply venues for local planning by a regional district, but also for community design by/for/with the community folks themselves. In recent years there has been increased commitment to local area plans, village centre plans and community-based work. Regional-level documents outline the significance of local planning, as well as providing what may be regarded as the general framing for more community design; they also may be assessed as leaving enough room for each locality to embrace its uniqueness, capture its community spirit, and build constructively on any eccentricities. Community design and regional planning should be regarded as inter-dependent; one cannot exist without the other; they deserve to be ‘on the same page’, to be either ends of the same ‘bridge’.

Bridging the Gap between Regional Planning and Community Design - A working premise of this project has been that regional planning and community design are often

‘poles apart’, in practice — while theory might suggest their better integration. As mentioned above, there is a related distinction that seems to need to be observed, as well as another integration challenge, between ‘local planning’ and ‘community design’. It seems to have been too easy/common to simply conflate the two (and in consequence this has been a very real challenge for this project). For the most part, the examined literature — by default — infers that regional planning and community design are ‘poles apart’; it is hoped that this MDP represents a beginning in helping to fill this void. This was not necessarily the finding of the case study research pertaining to the Regional District of Nanaimo; here there appears to be a connection between regional planning and community design, although the connection seems to be very recent, in one featured locale to this point (Cedar). It may or may not prove to be a general trend; time will tell.

In the RDN setting, policies tend to start at the regional level, but are informed by local circumstances, and are devised to be translatable to localities. For instance, the Regional Growth Strategy outlines general designations, the Official Community Plans set further direction, and Local Area Plans (LAP) provide the context for community design intervention, among other matters. For the representative of the Regional District of Nanaimo interviewed, it was not so much about how different concepts (such as agricultural urbanism) may help to better ‘bridge’ regional planning and community design, but was more about learning from what is going on (such as the AAP, RGS, OCP, LAP, other projects such as the RVC inventory/study or the research into alternative forms of rural development) and how it is being done (implemented, acted upon, and evaluated for further learning) in practice. The experiences of planners in the RDN focused not on concepts that might represent improvement on the status quo, but more on

direct learning about how to best turn a plan into a reality of sorts, through integrating (often regional level plans) at the community level.

An underlying interest of this MDP has centred on how regional planning and community design are currently integrated. In the case of the RDN it has been found that on paper and in practice the level of integration was greater than expected. In the central Vancouver Island context, planners here are able to navigate and weave together their own working concepts of community design and regional planning, through provincial policies, community consultations and a (relatively) supportive political climate; it is a highly pragmatic practice of planning.

Better integration of community design and regional planning may mean there is an increased role for planners, and for planning — specifically in unincorporated rural areas. This is simply the beginning of a discussion around improved linkages between regional planning and community design. There are questions that will arise as linkages strengthen — such as: Will better integration lessen the importance of each? Will important aspects be ‘lost’?; Does this mean that formulating appropriate policy will require the involvement of greater numbers of stakeholders, thus potentially lengthening and complicating processes? Or, will outcomes be improved? Will improved integration result in better plans and greater community engagement? Or will it result in neither the regional nor the local spheres being fully satisfied? Presently these are all ‘unknowns’ and are points of conjecture which may eventually evolve into ‘knowns’ — providing the planners themselves place enough importance on self-evaluation, and continual learning-by-doing.

7.3.2 Planning Education & Professional Development

From this experience of examining selected literature, looking at specific real-world planning experiences and taking the opportunity to engage a range of planners, it is clear that planning as a profession is always evolving, and planners themselves must also be always evolving to remain relevant and of service to the wider society. Once ‘formal’ foundational professional ‘schooling’ is over, this MDP has shown that planners must continue to *learn beyond that foundational professional education*. A planner’s education needs to be ongoing; it does not stop when they defend their major degree project, or when they graduate. I — personally — hope to take this learning to heart.

This MDP has engaged several emerging concepts and perspectives — such as Agricultural Urbanism and Complete Communities, and placemaking and community design — which may not have been part of a practicing planner’s foundational education. This dynamic requires planners to keep up-to-date, to remain professionally relevant, to best benefit the communities they are working with and for. Even concepts that may seem well understood intuitively — such as placemaking — evolve, as societies and cultures evolve, and must be reworked and redefined to fit changing contexts (in this case, in the urban-rural fringe, ‘in-between’ unincorporated and incorporated worlds). Planning schools try to teach the most current concepts and perspectives, as well as the tried and true, but practicing planners — and their profession/institute, must embrace ongoing education as part of their ongoing professional role. They need to embrace the conventional, and the ‘conventional-to-come’. There is also an opportunity for improved cross-pollination of practicing professionals and academics to further explore concepts discussed in this MDP. Awake, enlightened, reflective practicing planners are essential

for the development of planning to be of greater service in the world — in this case by helping planners become better agents of greater integration, of much that has previously been unduly differentiated.

7.3.3 Direction for Future Studies

This study has focused on regional planning for growth containment in unincorporated rural areas, and specifically the place of Complete Communities and Agricultural Urbanism (in conjunction with more of a ‘planning as placemaking’ approach). The project has considered: how regional planners responsible for non-urban areas attempt to apply growth management strategies; how growth containment in particular has been pursued in urban/rural fringe settings; how typically urban-centric concepts may be applicable in more rural settings; and how particular concepts and approaches might better link community design and regional planning — connecting region and locality, planning and design, space and place, with community as the building block — the cells that constitute the larger organism (in this case, the region). In many respects this project has only scratched the surface of such inquiries; further research is certainly in order.

One area already identified for future research consideration relates to further investigation surrounding the RDN’s rural village centres. While these provided case study data, as policies associated with a strategy, more research focused on and within the RVCs themselves — individually and collectively — would be useful, especially to help ground ongoing policy evaluation, and to inform policy refinement. This research could target more the people in/of each place, that make the place in an ongoing way — their histories and stories, their hopes and fears. In particular there is a need for more place-

specific stories to balance the cold, clinical comparative statistics. As the role(s) of RVCs become clearer and better-defined within the regional context, there may be an opportunity to investigate how a tiering or differentiation of the individual village centres (e.g. identifying specific roles, in wider district contexts) might help the RDN to better achieve policies identified in their RGS. Some initial working hypotheses have been offered above, to direct this work (e.g. the distinction between Rural District Village Centres and Country Residential Estate Districts).

As this project has progressed it was noticed that there is a place for Complete Communities to be viewed less in terms of its current urban-centric focus (within a city for example), and more in terms of rural contexts in a wider regional setting. The project has considered the ‘fit’ of CC in the unincorporated rural context, in urban/rural fringe settings especially — and how it could be redefined or reworked to better reflect these particular settings. Current literature and research seems to be primarily focused on Complete Communities in cities and/or higher-density areas (Grant and Scott, 2012); there is an opportunity to flush out what ‘complete’ means in rural/regional contexts, including its fundamental applicability, or otherwise. This research has indicated that there may be room for a variant of CC to inform particular RVCs - especially those that might be classified as Rural District Village Centres, which are in effect low-order/basic needs ‘service centres’ for a small wider district. A different variant of CC, pitching ‘completeness’ in the context of a region as a ‘community of communities’, might help to make better sense of the RVCs that appear to be more Country Residential Estate Districts. These ‘round out’ the region in terms of options for many forms of residential settlement — in this case, ‘urban’ living in ‘country’ settings — even though many of the

districts may feel more like discontinuous suburbs of nearby large urban centres. These Districts have more ties with the large urban centre than they do with their neighbouring district/s or environs. Further research could establish the validity, or otherwise, of such conjecture.

There was a large gap in the current literature relating to Agricultural Urbanism; it is simply a very new perspective, with little documented commentary or evaluation at the present time. The present research has been engaging new territory with respect to AU, and may best be regarded as ‘pioneering’ in this respect. As reported earlier, this research has identified a range of discomfort, uneasiness, and/or unfamiliarity, during the interview process, when discussing this topic with many interviewees; it did not seem to resonate with the majority of practicing planners engaged.

AU is an emerging concept, one that will either be embraced — and incorporated across the urban-fringe-rural continuum — or one that will be cast aside due to lack of understanding or appreciation. There are vast amounts of information on Urban Agriculture, and it seemed in many interviews that Urban Agriculture was being muddled/referenced in contrast with AU — but these concepts are considered very different. Moving forward, these differences need to be better documented, highlighted, and discussed to create a space where Agricultural Urbanism can be better understood and (ultimately) more positively embraced. Research surrounding AU is just beginning. A key recommendation for future research is to explore and elaborate this topic through specific case studies or demonstration projects/pilots and — importantly — publishing findings in planning practitioner literature, as a means of developing greater acceptance and connectedness to AU.

Based on the present research AU can play a role in better connecting regional planning and community design, in a general regional district setting such as the RDN, but also in the particular context of the urban/rural fringe. It can bring a constructive framing to the whole transect, from the purely/highly urban to the purely/highly rural. It can provide guidance for detailed planning and design in relation to the individual RVCs, especially in terms of the distinctions mentioned earlier. It is obviously most relevant to the Rural District Village Centres context, but it could also be the basis/framing/rationale for any further development, or redevelopment within, the Country Residential Estate Districts.

Somewhat similar to Agricultural Urbanism, community design is another area which could benefit from further research. Information gathered surrounding community design was less robust than expected. During the interview process community design was often immediately linked to urban design, and while the latter may play a part in the more urban parts of a region, *community* design needs to be the main design focus in rural areas especially. Finding an appropriate way to disseminate the value of community design to planners, especially those planning in the unincorporated rural communities context, would be beneficial.

7.4 Final Thoughts

This study has focused on investigating regional planning for growth containment in unincorporated rural areas — especially where these areas are adjacent to rapidly growing incorporated urban-region centres. It is a particularly complex ‘in-between’ arena of planning, spanning urban and rural, the natural and the political, and with many,

localized, community-specific, challenges. This research has attempted to mobilize a wide range of concepts to try to capture some of the complexity, and to do justice to the region as a fundamental organizing construct — for planning, and for design. It has been an effort to see the region as a whole, as a whole-system — complex, adaptive, and ‘self-organizing’ — especially in terms of its constituent communities. It is based on in-depth investigation of a specific case — the RDN, its RGS and its RVC policies. Further research could usefully explore regional planning in other contexts, but also in terms of a ‘planning as placemaking’ perspective, viewing regions as a community of communities, with opportunities to creatively integrate new concepts, such as CC and AU. Ideally, this will produce a better over-all understanding of how unincorporated rural areas can be better appreciated as an important piece of the regional planning puzzle; they are places that matter.

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Appendix 1: Rural Village Centres

Appendix 1a – Aerial View Maps of Rural Village Centres

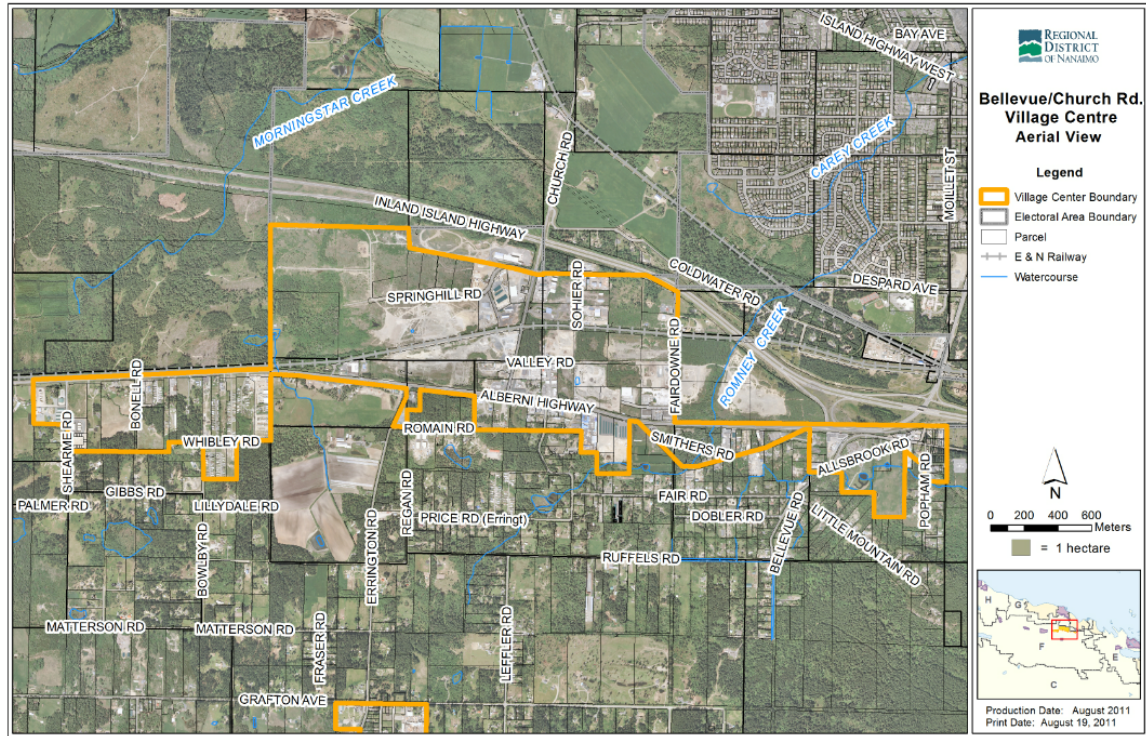


Figure i. Aerial View of Bellevue-Church Rural Village Centre



Figure ii. Aerial View of Bowser Rural Village Centre

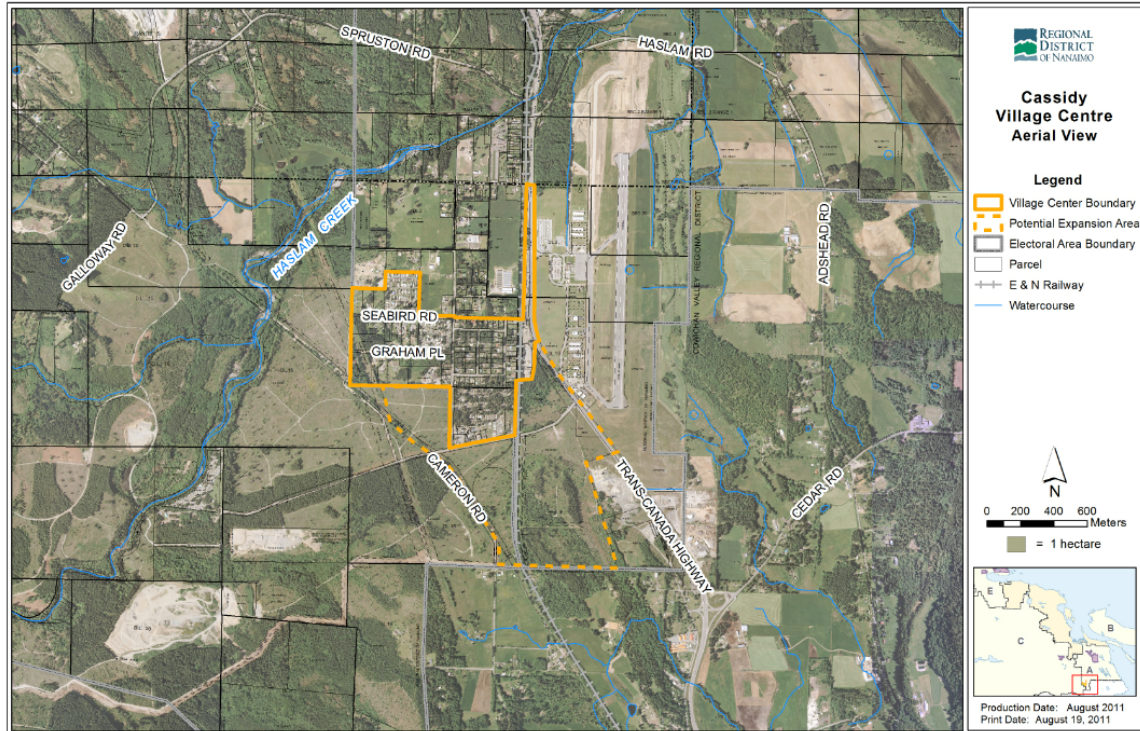


Figure iii. Aerial View of Cassidy Rural Village Centre

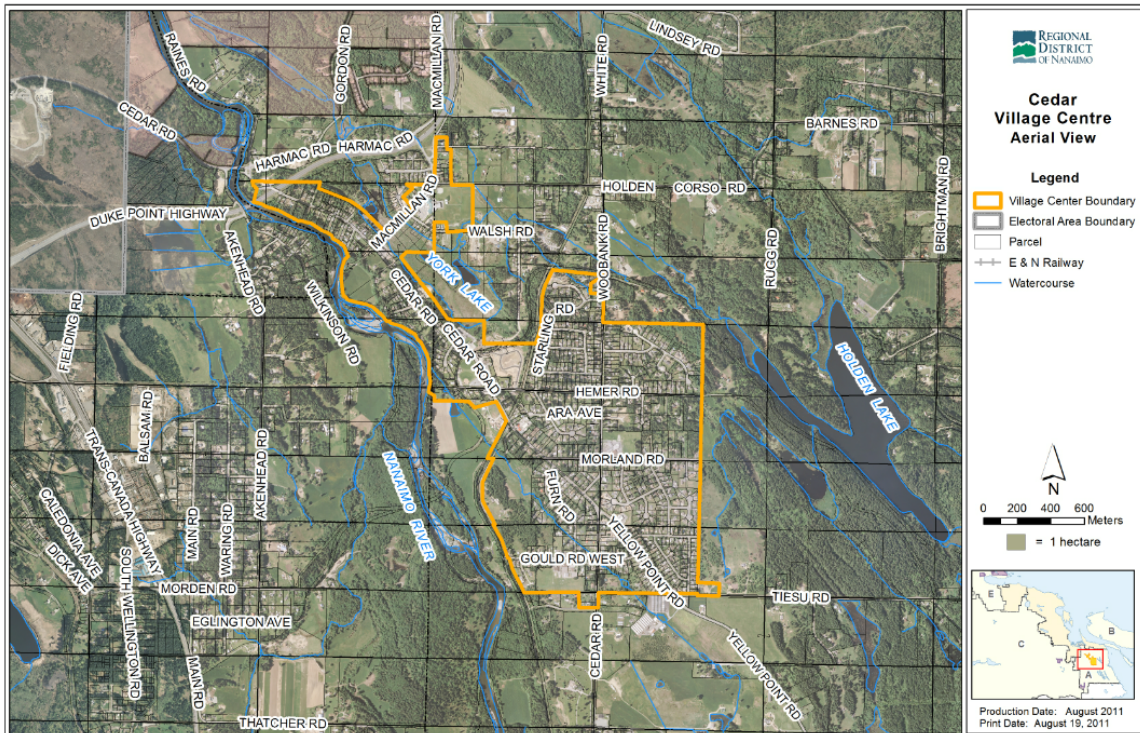


Figure iv. Aerial View of Cedar Rural Village Centre

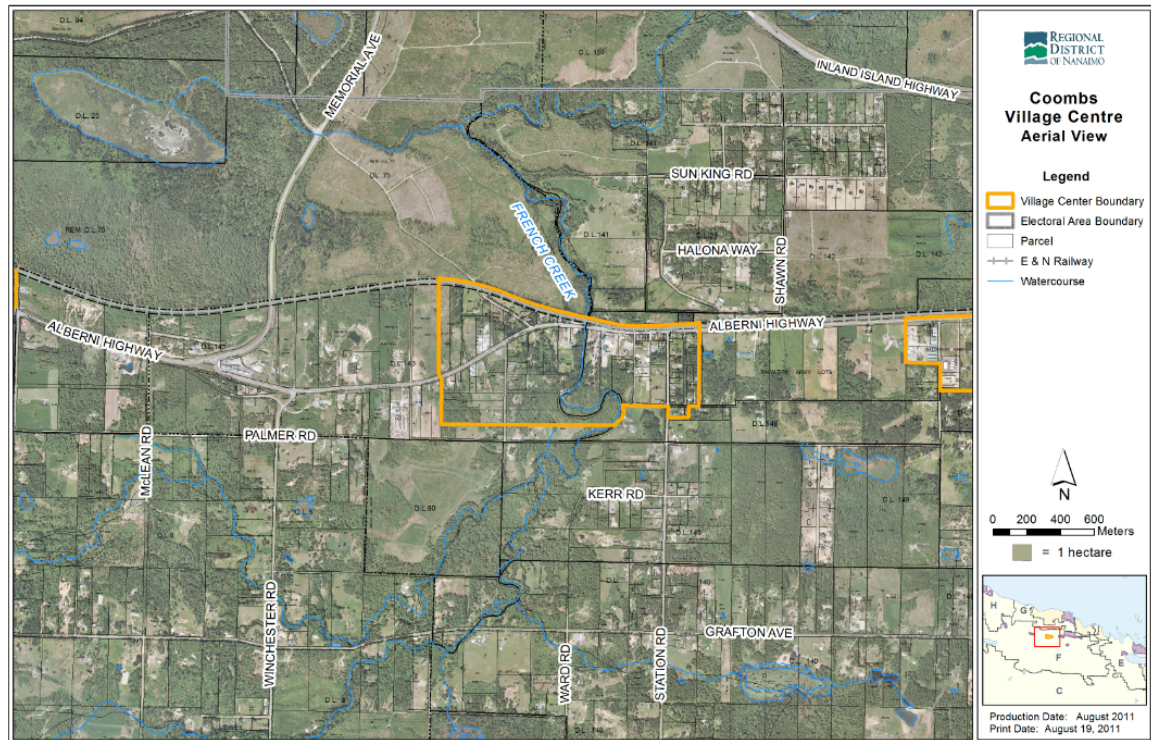


Figure v. Aerial View of Coombs Rural Village Centre



Figure vi. Aerial View of Qualicum Bay & Dunsmuir Rural Village Centres

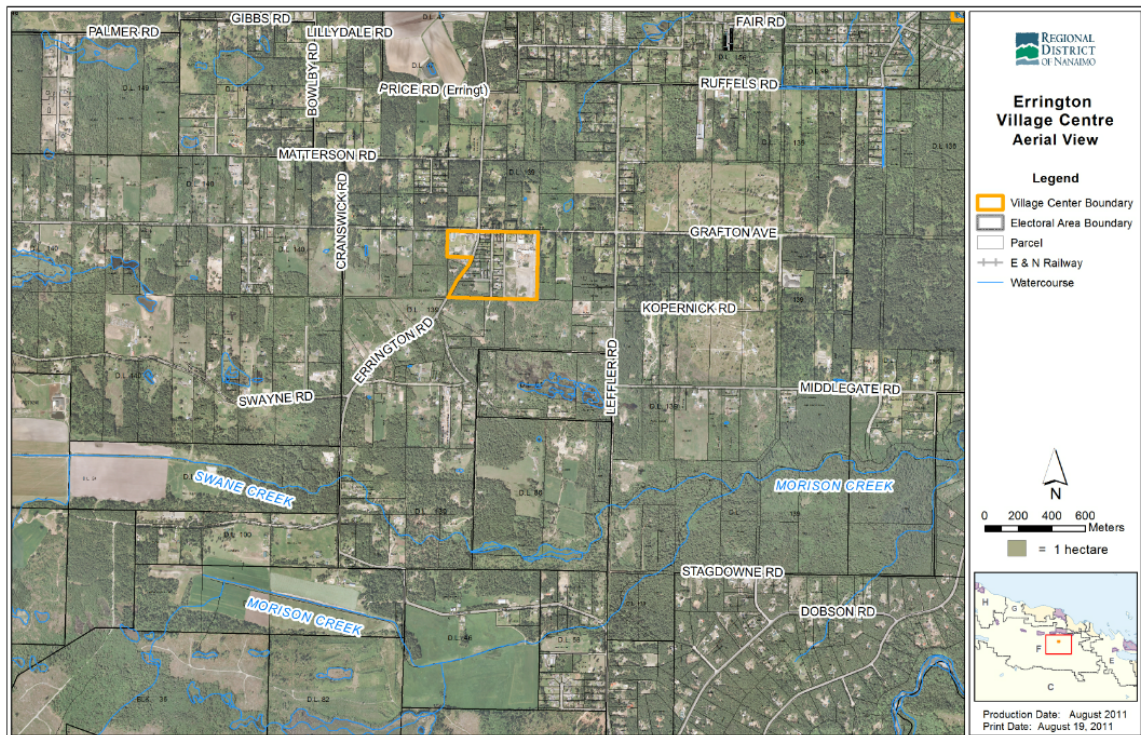


Figure vii. Aerial View of Errington Rural Village Centre

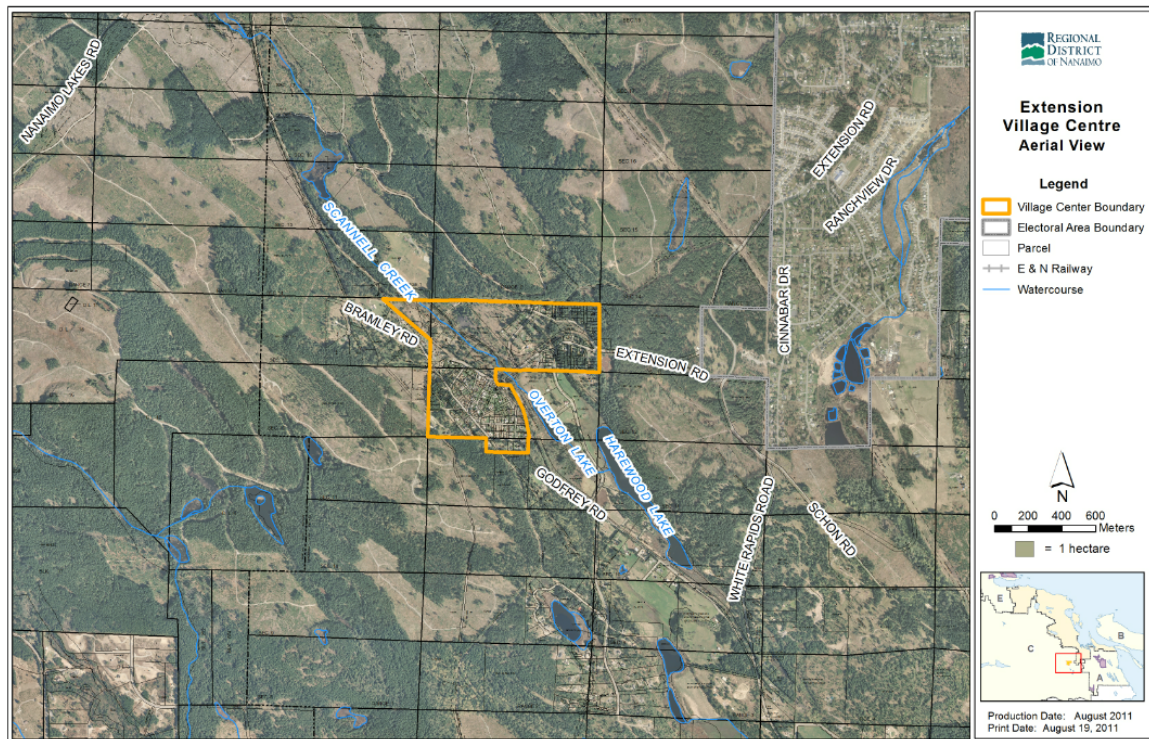


Figure viii. Aerial View of Extension Rural Village Centre

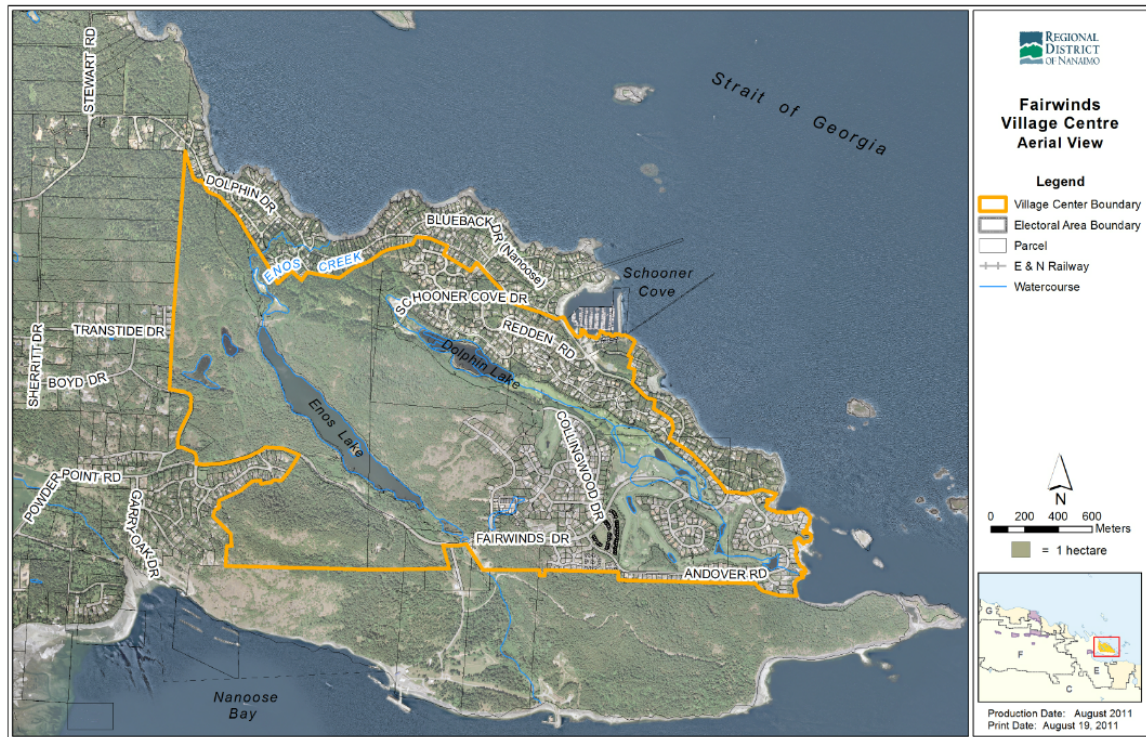


Figure ix. Aerial View of Fairwinds Rural Village Centre

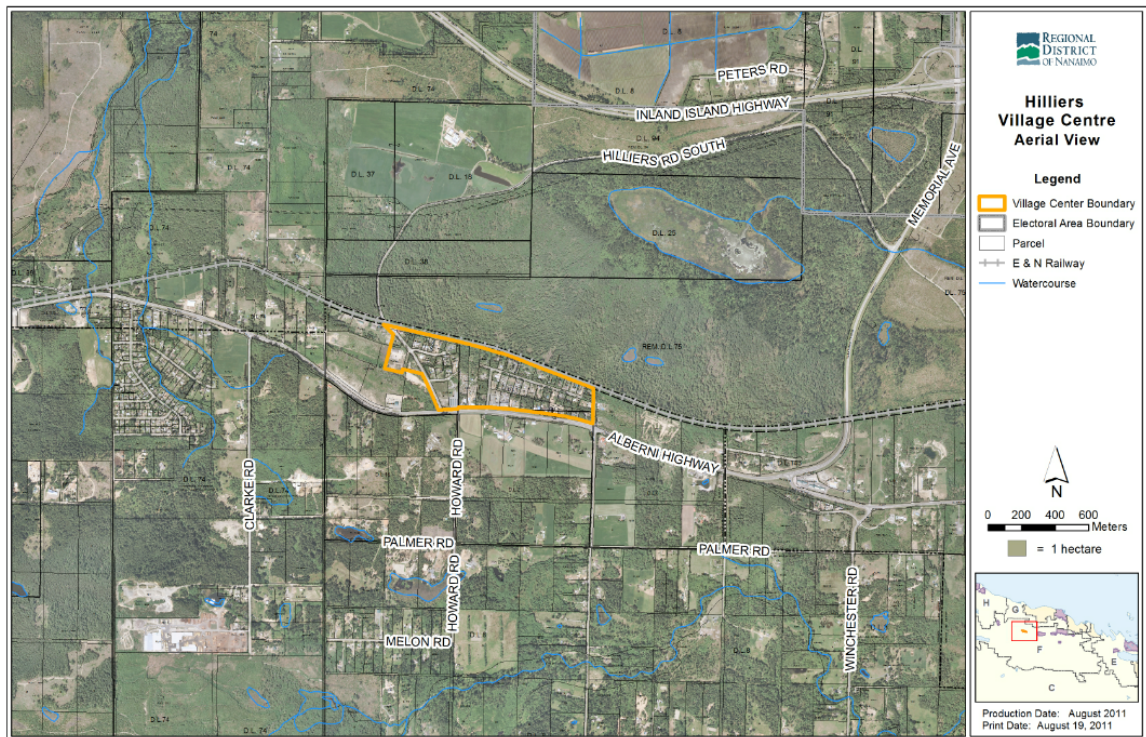


Figure x. Aerial View of Hilliers Rural Village Centre

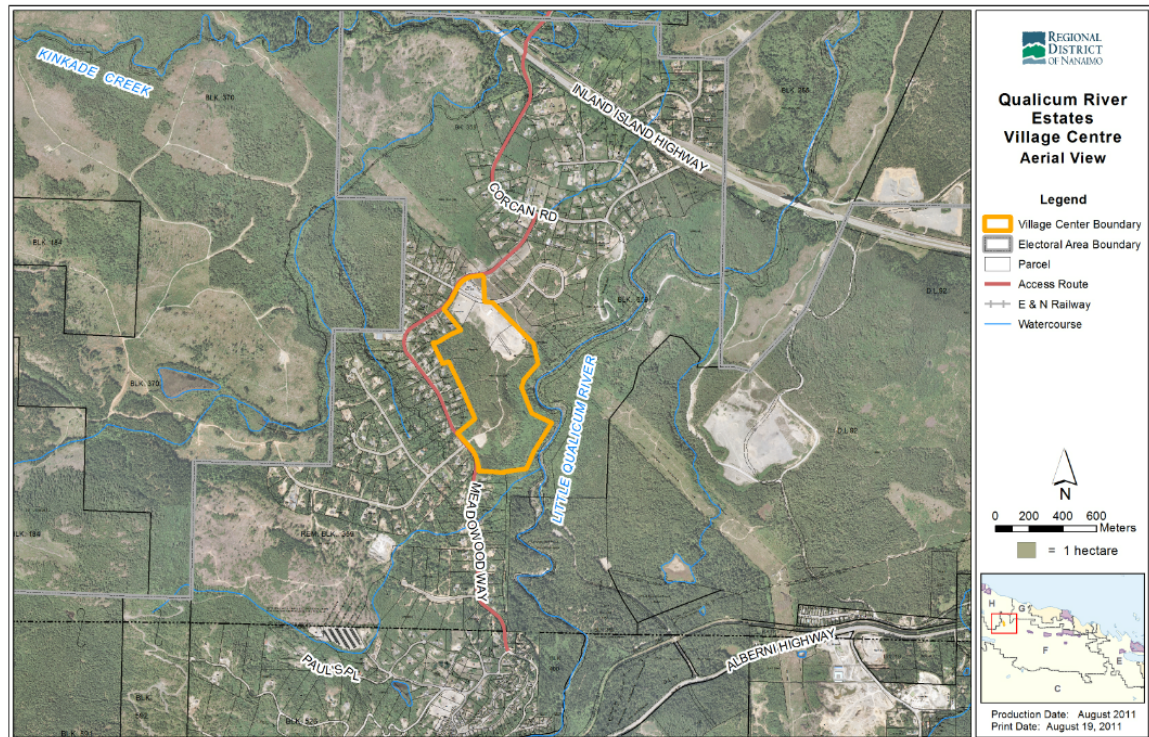


Figure xi. Aerial View of Qualicum River Rural Village Centre

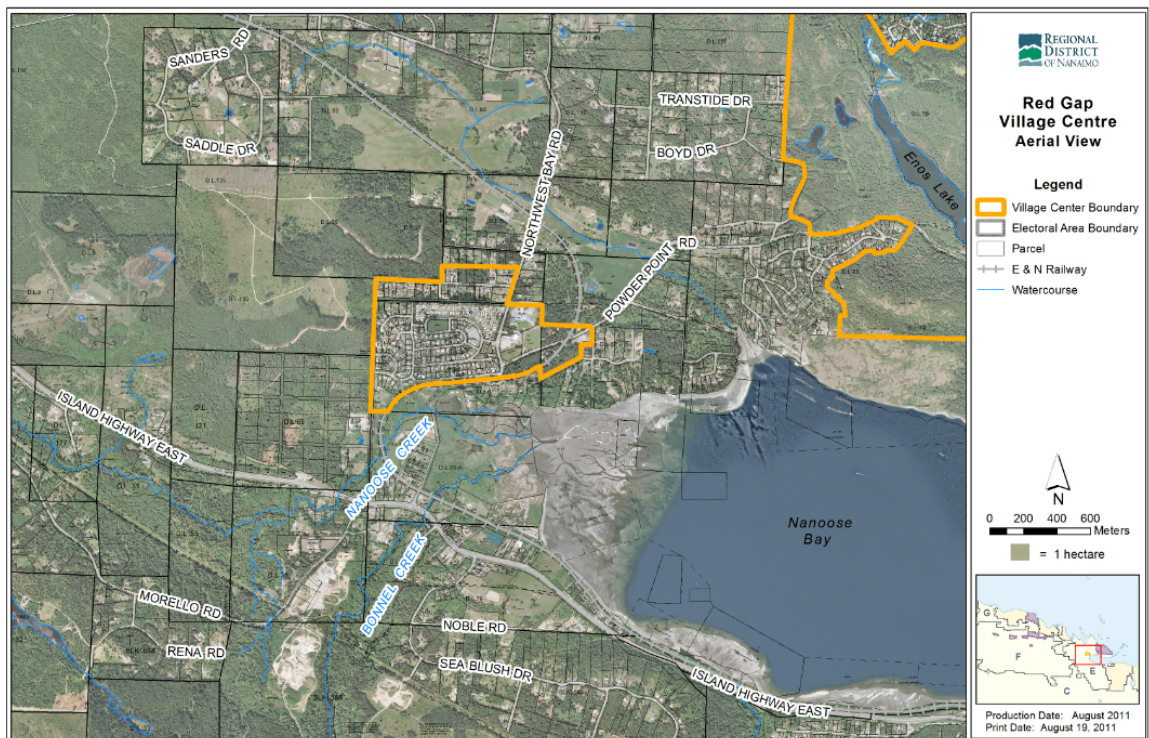


Figure xii. Aerial View of Red Gap Rural Village Centre

Appendix 1b – Summary Table of Rural Village Centres

Summary of Village Centre Services, Facilities and Features

Rural Village Centre	LOCATION/DESCRIPTION							SERVICES				AMENITIES									ENVIRONMENT			
	Electoral Area	Land Area (hectares)	Total Lot Count	Existing # of Dwelling Units	Density (units/ha)	Nearest Urban Area	Village Plan Completed	Transit Service	Served by Community Water System	Served by Community Sewer System	% of RVC as Park	Community Hall	Grocery/Corner Store	Restaurant/Café Coffee Shop	Gas Station	Medical/Dental Facility	District School (SD 68 or 69)	Other Educational Facility	Fire Hall	Watercourse Present	Aquifer Vulnerability	Contains Sensitive Ecosystem(s)	Includes/Borders ALR	
Cassidy	A	71	115	386	5.4	Ladysmith	N	N	N	N	0	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	L & H	N	Y	
Cedar	A	275	863	811	2.9	Nanaimo South	In Progress	Y	Y	Partial	0.44	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	M	Y	Y	
Extension	C	67	305	104	1.6	Nanaimo South	N	N	Y	N	2.9	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	M	Y	Y	
Fairwinds	E	525	940	654	1.2	Parksville	Y	N	Y	Y	1.8	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	M	Y	N	
Red Gap	E	70	209	290	4.1	Parksville	N	Y	Y	N	6.6	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	N	L	N	Y	
Bellevue- Church Road	F	334	191	325	1.0	Parksville	N	N	Partial	N	0	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	M	Y	Y	
Coombs	F	101	98	101	1.0	Qualicum Beach	N	N	N	N	0	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	M	Y	Y	
Errington	F	20	36	29	1.5	Parksville	N	N	N	N	9.1	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	M	N	Y	
Hilliers	F	36	89	108	3.0	Qualicum Beach	N	N	N	N	0.67	N	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	N	M	Y	Y	
Qualicum River Estates	F	43	16	2	0.05	Qualicum Beach	N	N	N	N	22	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	L	N	N	
Bowser	H	63	96	80	1.3	Qualicum Beach	Y	N	Y	N	0.52	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	M	Y	Y	
Dunsmuir	H	115	170	160	1.4	Qualicum Beach	N	N	Y	N	3.8	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	L	N	Y	
Qualicum Bay	H	147	72	92	0.6	Qualicum Beach	N	N	Y	N	4	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y	Y	M	N	Y	

Appendix 2 – Interviewing

INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. How do growth management practices differ in fringe areas (where ‘city meets country’) compared to other parts of a region?
2. As a planner familiar with rural areas facing development pressures from their nearby expanding urban centres – if it was up to you – what is your approach in response to such pressures? The principles you seek to follow?
3. As a professional planner – what do you think are the planning and community design implications of your (above-outlined) approach? Your underlying aims/goals?
4. In the rural context, what form/level/intensity of growth management/containment do you consider is appropriate? What are the implementation considerations, especially in the context of unincorporated rural areas/electoral areas?
5. Based on your own experience to date, how might rural growth management/containment be best approached? The challenges? The opportunities? What current concepts seem most applicable as guidance?
6. The concept of ‘(rural) village centre’ is being mentioned in some contexts. In your experience, how does such a concept ‘fit’ the rural growth management/containment setting? If so, what are the critical elements for success? If no, why?
7. Villages are generally associated with rural areas, where non-farm uses mainly serving a local rural district are concentrated. These are almost naturally ‘rural village centres’. In rural growth management/containment contexts how might the ‘village concept’ need to be differentiated, especially if it is serving additional purposes, such as a bedroom community tied to a larger urban centre?
8. How, if at all, does the policy concept of ‘complete communities’ apply in such contexts? If so, in what critical ways? If no, why?
9. Can you briefly outline your own working understanding of regional planning? And its relation to community-based planning?
10. Can you briefly explain your own working understanding of community design? And its relationship to regional planning?

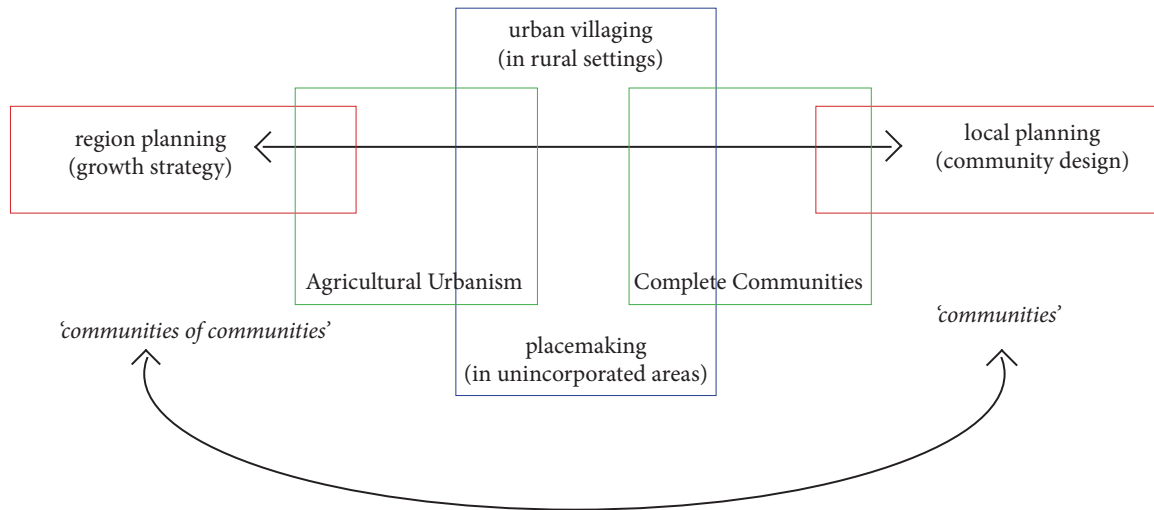
11. What is the place of 'placemaking', for you, in regional planning and/or community design? (If appropriate) how do you elaborate the notion of place, and placemaking, that you attempt to apply in your practice?
12. Some planning practitioners have recently been advocating an approach to regional planning centered on the concept of agricultural urbanism. Can you comment on your understanding of this concept and its potential applicability to the contexts we have been addressing? (rural region growth management/containment, involving rural villages/urban villages, in unincorporated rural areas).
13. Thinking back to your comments on 'complete communities' - in your opinion, how (if at all) does the policy concept of 'agricultural urbanism' apply in such contexts? If so, in what critical ways? If no, why?
14. In your opinion, how does/could concepts such as 'complete communities' and 'agricultural urbanism' help to better bridge regional planning and community design, in practice?
15. Are there other such concepts that, in your opinion, merit more consideration in efforts to better connect regional planning (for growth strategizing) and community design (for rural or urban villages) in ways that are particularly respectful of rural settings?
16. As a professional planner, in your experience, and in your opinion – what are the implications for planning (and for planners) better integration of regional planning and community design?
17. Is there anything else you would like to share, that might bear consideration in this Masters Degree Project?

Thank You!

Appendix 2b – Visual Context Summary

This handout is meant to briefly familiarize you with the context of my project, as well as provide information and perceived interrelation surrounding major themes to be discussed (please see reverse). The title of the project is:

*Regional Planning for Growth Containment in Unincorporated Rural Areas:
The Place of Complete Communities and Agricultural Urbanism?
A case study of the RDN's Rural Village Centre Strategy*



The below information provide background surrounding the major themes to be discussed. The non-italicized text defines the concept, as found in the literature. The italicized text is my working meaning(s). Any questions, suggestions and opinions are encouraged.

Urban Village/Urban Villaging: is typically applied in a city-like setting and is characterized by mid/high-density development, mixed-used zoning, transit options, open public spaces, and pedestrian-focused design. This concept, claimed to have been formally coined by the Urban Villages Group in the UK (Aldous, 1992).

Somewhere which has been well-planned, lots of options (for shopping, living, working), exudes pedestrian priority and is well-connected to other places.

Agricultural Urbanism: a “framework for integrating a wide range of sustainable food and agriculture system elements into a community at a site, neighbourhood, or on a city-wide scale” (de la Salle & Holland, 2010, p.240).

An approach that spans spatial scales - from city to country, urban to rural - through necessity (food). An example of how planning works across a region.

Complete Communities: “allows for people of all ages and abilities to safely and conveniently meet their daily needs through a diverse mix of food distribution options, local and public services, housing choices, employment opportunities, open areas and recreational spaces, and an efficient public transportation system, all of which are supported by the necessary infrastructure to accommodate a wide variety of lifestyle choices” (Donaldson, et al., 2010, p.30).

A given diverse area where one can live, work, and play and have the majority of day-to-day needs met.

Placemaking: “is the way in which all human beings transform the places they find themselves into the places where they live” (Schneekloth & Shibley, 1995, p.1).

The ‘making’ of a place; the story associated with a given location - can be personal, individual, communal, and/or regional.

Regional Planning: is “any area which is larger than a single-city” (Friedman, 1963, p.169) and/or a region is “the surrounding country, towns and villages” (Gertler, 1972, p.17).

Planning that spans a vast area, or set of areas, which exude multiple diverse characteristics.

Local Planning (Community Design): is where the planner positions themselves more as the architect of community, in a community-privileging context (Francis, 1983). This approach is about process and product and “is typically small scale, local, and inclusive of user needs” (ibid, p.15). Through the community design approach, “there is not a ‘right’ way to design but only ‘appropriate’ approaches” to finding solutions and solving problems. (ibid, p.19).

Driven by the community, for the community. Not necessarily a bottom-up approach, but does involve and address localized issues.

Appendix 3 – Informed Consent

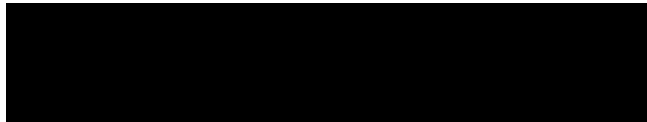
Research Project Title: *Regional Planning for Growth in Unincorporated Rural Areas: The place of 'Complete Communities and Agricultural Urbanism? A case study of the RDN's rural village centre strategy.*

Researcher(s): **Jill Collinson**

Research Supervisor: **Dr. Ian Wight**

Please contact me if you have any questions:

Jill Collinson



This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

1. Purpose of the Research:

The purpose of this research is to satisfy the major degree project requirements of the Master of City Planning Degree at the University of Manitoba. The project is titled *Regional Planning for Growth in Unincorporated Rural Areas: The Place of Complete Communities and Agricultural Urbanism? A case study of the RDN's rural village centre strategy.* The purpose of the research is to investigate how growth containment can be better managed in the rural context, by exploring the combined applicability of the concepts of complete communities and agricultural urbanism, in unincorporated rural area settings in particular.

2. Risk:

There are no particular risks or benefits to you in participating in this study. There are no risks associated with this project beyond normal everyday risk. The study does not address personal or confidential issues. The study asks only for your professional knowledge about rural regional planning, associated policies, and their context, on Vancouver Island at the present time.

3. Procedures:

You are being asked to participate in an interview involving questions on rural region planning, and related regional growth containment strategising. Interviews are intended to clarify and supplement published public materials on these matters. The interviews are expected to take one hour in length. The interviews will be recorded and notes taken. The project will include up to nine key informant interviews from three different cities.

4. Recording Devices:

This interview will take approximately one hour of your time. With your permission, the interview will be recorded with a digital recorder and notes of the interview taken. You will not be identified in the thesis document. All audio files and interview notes collected during the research process will be stored in a locked cabinet in my home office. After the project is complete, interview recordings and notes will be destroyed. If you do not wish for the conversation to be recorded, I will take hand-written notes only. However, recording will ensure a more accurate record of your responses in the final document.

5. Confidentiality:

Your privacy is important. You will not be personally identified in the MDP document. Information you provide during the interview will be coded for use in the project. Recordings of interviews, and notes taken, will be secured during the project and destroyed at project completion, expected in August, 2012. You should be aware that the general nature/locale of your place of work, and the broad parameters of your professional role will be indicated to help contextualise your input. It may be possible for those with special knowledge of these contexts to infer your identity. Given the small pool of relevant participants, a participant might be identifiable by their turn of phrase as used in the project. However, no personal information will be gathered and I will only be asking questions relating to your professional expertise on the subjects of this study. If at any time you wish to withdraw from the interview please let me know and your responses will not be used in the final document. If after the interview you wish to withdraw from the project, please contact me directly (prior to August 1, 2012) and your responses will not be used in the final document.

6. Feedback:

A summary of research results will be made available to all participants. For those who are interested, the final completed MDP will also be made available. Feedback will be provided by email in PDF format.

7. Credit or Remuneration:

There is no credit, remuneration, or compensation for participant involvement in this study.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. **You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence.** Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

The University of Manitoba Research Ethics Board(s) and a representative(s) of the University of Manitoba Research Quality Management / Assurance office may also require access to your research records for safety and quality assurance purposes.

This research has been approved by the Joint Faculty Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator (HEC) at 204 474-7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Participant's Signature _____ Date _____

Researcher Signature _____ Date _____