

Policy Brief

Corridor Country: Habitat Corridors to Improve the Lives of All Lake Country Residents, Wildlife and Humans.

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Objective

This initiative aims to **preserve biodiversity** and **enhance ecosystem resilience** by improving habitat connectivity in Lake Country. By integrating wildlife corridors into urban planning and development, we strive to **create a sustainable future where humans and wildlife thrive**.

Background

Lake Country is known for its stunning surroundings and proximity to nature. However, the unprecedented population growth in the area, and the resulting urbanization threatens to sever this connection to the natural world. To address this we are proposing integrated wildlife corridors within the municipality. We will utilize 3 strategies to accomplish this: Advocacy and a Legal Framework, GIS Mapping and Identification, and the development of a stewardship program. We want this project to be mutually beneficial to people and animals, so when opportunities arise, we also hope to develop trails in these corridor areas, harkening back to a dual mandate state of mind. Where we are trying to preserve biodiversity, while also allowing for active transportation and recreation, to help people connect to these areas. As policy makers, we hope to convince you that this endeavor is needed, well planned and executable. Your assistance and support will be essential in seeing change at the legal framework level, and securing funding for the supporting activities.



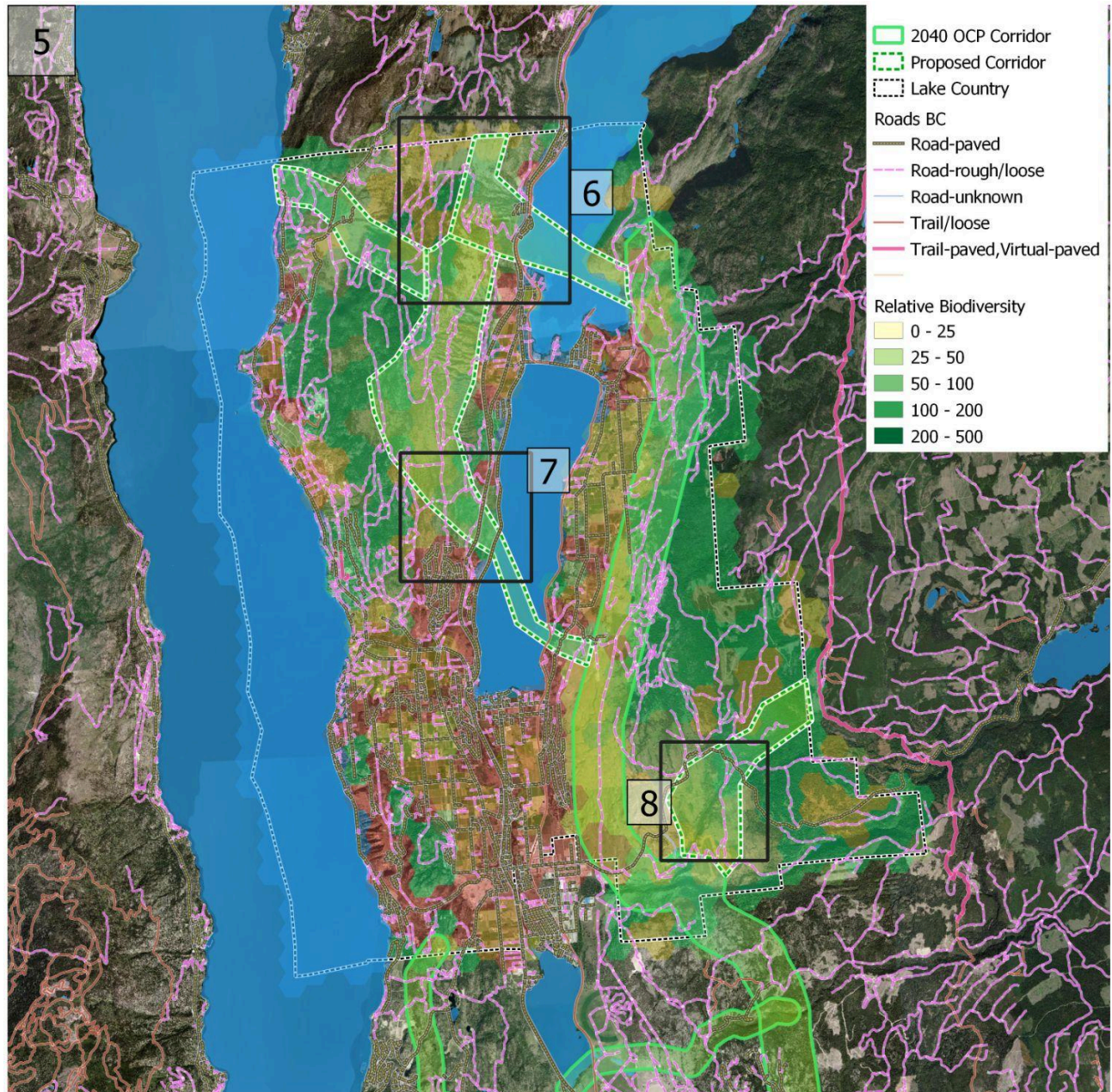
Wildlife-friendly fences can facilitate the movement of animals and reduce their casualties, requiring legal support and farmer education



Using boardwalks and walkways helps to significantly reduce human impact on the environment and provides a less obstructive surface for animal movement



Avoiding monoculture plantings and creating connections between agricultural lands and ecological patches through hedge growth plantings that produce fruits or wildlife feed in different seasons and facilitate the movement of animals from agricultural lands to natural patches.



Through our own mapping efforts we have determined the best locations within the Lake Country area for these wildlife corridors. Green areas outlined with dotted green lines represent the areas that our following strategies will aim to preserve and protect. Our project is aligned with and complements the already existing planning efforts to preserve a major wildlife corridor (identified as 2040 OCP Corridor in map) from Okanagan Mountain Park to Kalamalka Lake Park, spearheaded by the Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program.

Strategies

1. Advocacy and Legal Framework

- **Objective:** Ensure protection and inclusion of wildlife corridors in land-use planning.
- **Action Steps:**
 - Advocate for the inclusion of our identified corridor areas in Natural Environment Development Permit Areas (NEDPAs).
 - Collaborate with local government, conservation organizations, and landowners to create other legal provisions for corridor protection, and to acquire land in support of the corridor when possible.

2. GIS Mapping and Identification

- **Objective:** Identify critical areas for habitat connectivity.
- **Action Steps:**
 - Conduct detailed GIS mapping to pinpoint areas where wildlife corridors are most needed.
 - Prioritize connecting smaller habitat patches to the main corridor between Oyama and Winfield.
 - Consider topography, existing land use, and ecological significance.

3. Stewardship Program

- **Objective:** Engage private landowners in habitat preservation and restoration efforts.
- **Action Steps:**
 - Gain the support of existing stewardship groups such as the Okanagan Similkameen Stewardship Society, to collaborate on corridor related education and habitat enhancement projects.
 - If existing stewardship programs do not have the capacity, we will develop our own corridor specific stewardship group. "Corridor Country".
 - Develop private incentives for landowners to participate in corridor enhancement projects.
 - Reach out to landowners for education on best practices for maintaining wildlife-friendly landscapes.
 - The stewardship program would also help with sustainable trail development in corridor areas, so that people can utilize and connect with these natural spaces as well.

Benefits

Biodiversity Conservation

- As per the community charter, municipal governments are responsible for managing their local environments, and this includes the endangered species and unique ecosystems that are present here in Lake Country.
- Biodiversity also serves as a buffer to enhance resilience against climate change impacts, a major goal identified in the Lake Country Community Plan.

Ecosystem Services

- Our environments give back to us; providing services that can be evaluated with significant economic values. In the Okanagan the soil health, water quality, and pollination services that are endowed upon us by Nature are vital to local agricultural industries.



Using plant species found in corridors and ecological patches in WUIs (Wild Urban Interfaces) to create connections between parks, street landscapes and ecological patches. Designing rain gardens and Xeriscaping landscapes to protect water resources and manage urban runoff entering corridors, natural patches and the lake.

Tourism and Community Well-Being

- The Okanagan is a tourism hub, and these corridors could act as an attraction, bringing eco-tourists interested in wildlife observation, or hiking into the Lake Country area.
- We also hope that the corridors might foster community pride and well-being through a shared commitment to conservation.
- These spaces could be enhanced even further with community gardens or public kitchens, as opportunities and needs within the community arise.



Considering the tourist nature of Lake Country, structures should be designed to manage tourist visits with minimal environmental impact. Establishing public outdoor kitchens at tourist activity hubs can significantly reduce the need for individual fires for cooking and provide tourists with necessary environmental education in various ways. Creating a community garden near the kitchen enhances its potential for sustainable living education and strengthens civic engagement.

Active Transportation

- Corridors with complimentary pathways would allow for more opportunities for active transportation and recreation within the municipality.

Preserves the Character and Viewscapes of Lake Country

- For many, the appeal and livability of Lake Country lies in its proximity to nature, and the stunning natural viewscapes. A commitment to this corridor would protect and even enhance these characteristics of our area.

Property Prices

- While it is true that this corridor may limit or reduce the development of some natural areas in Lake Country, this effect would be offset by the benefits that the presence of these corridors would bring to property prices in the region. All of the previously listed benefits would have wildly positive effects on property prices overall in Lake Country.

Inspiring Examples

1. Banff National Park, Alberta, Canada:

- Their wildlife corridors on the Trans-Canada Highway have reduced wildlife collisions by at least 80%.
- Overpasses and underpasses allow animals like wolves and cougars to move safely across highways.

2. **Los Angeles, California, USA:**

- Despite being a megacity, Los Angeles has successfully conserved a network of wildlife corridors.
- Collaboration between scientists, non-profits, government agencies, and communities has sparked positive feedback.
- These corridors not only benefit wildlife but also strengthen urban resilience.

3. **Queensland, Australia:**

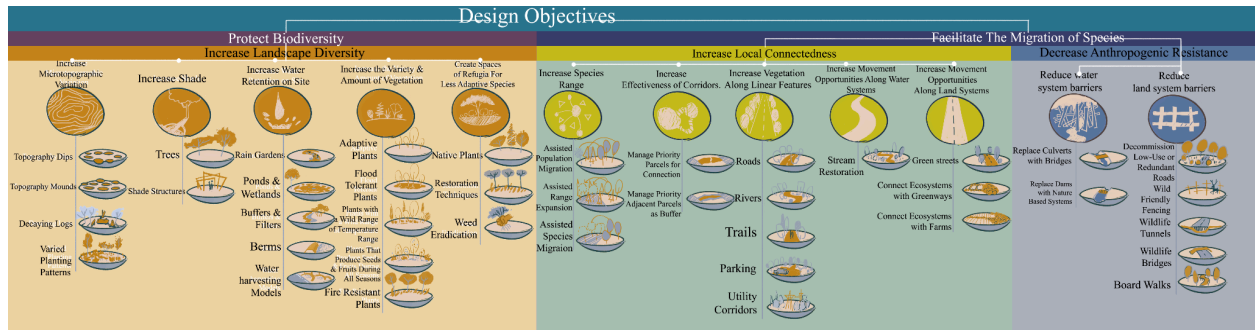
- Queensland showcases the successful coexistence of urban development and environmental conservation.
- Their wildlife corridors demonstrate how research, land acquisitions, collaboration, restoration, and outreach contribute to a thriving ecosystem.

Conclusion

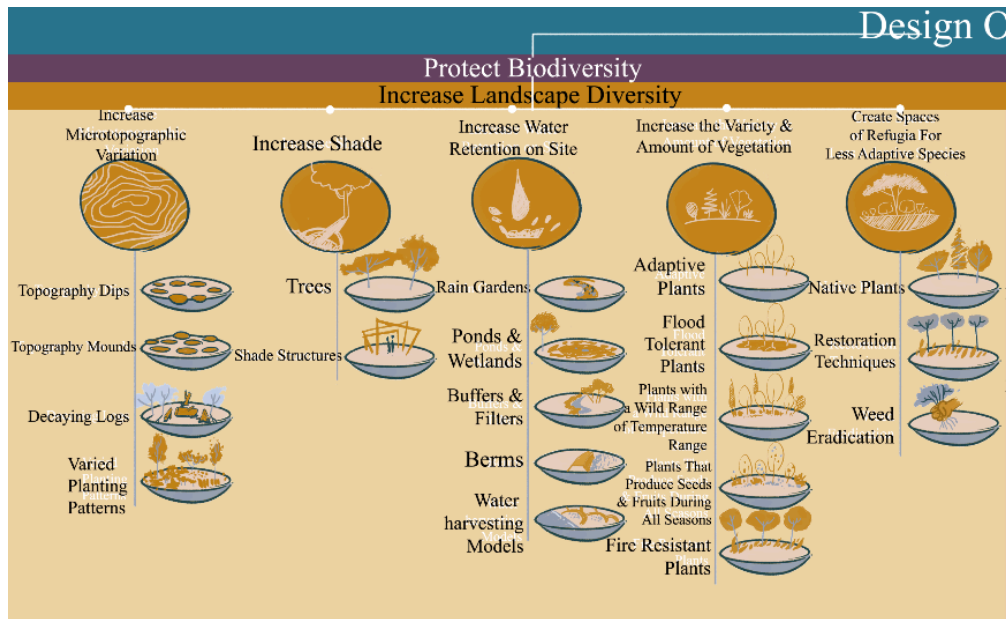
Help us by taking the necessary steps to support this project. By embracing a holistic approach that integrates wildlife-friendly pathways, active transportation, and ecoducts, Lake Country can become a leader in urban conservation. Let's envision a future where cities prioritize connectivity, allowing people and animals to thrive together.

Appendix: In Depth Design Examples Diagram for the Corridor Proposal

For your consideration, we have also detailed the depth of our proposal, to demonstrate the scalability of the work, and the holistic approach that we plan to utilize.



Magnified



Objectives

Facilitate The Migration of Species

