

Discovery Cafes Meeting Notes

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2017



Community meetings were held in November 2016 to address questions that emerged from the earlier phases of community consultation, including the surveys. These meetings were designed to address specific issues: aging in place, residential uses on agricultural lands, wetlands protection, Duncan bypass, and making it safer to walk, cycle, and ride within Area E. These notes reflect the community discussions, and will influence the formation of policy for the Official Community Plan. A draft OCP should be ready for community review by the fall of 2017!

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Cowichan Koksilah OCP Discovery Cafés

Meeting Notes

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Contents

Executive Summary	4
Aging in Place	4
Residential Uses on Agricultural Lands	4
Wetlands Protection	5
Duncan Bypass.....	5
Safer Walking, Cycling, and Riding within Area E	6
Conclusions.....	6
Glenora, November 3, 2016	7
Trails and Alternative Forms of Transportation	7
Duncan Bypass.....	7
Wetlands Protection.....	8
Residential Uses on Agricultural Lands	9
Aging in Place	9
Cowichan Station, November 5, 2016	9
Key issues for Cowichan Station	10
Aging in Place and Alternative Living Arrangements.....	11
Trails and Other Transportation Options	12
General Advice for the OCP	12
Sahtlam, November 15, 2016.....	13
Wetlands.....	13
Improving Active Transportation Options	14
Off-Road	14
On-Road	15
Aging in Place	15
Housing.....	16
Transportation.....	16
Residential Uses on Agricultural Lands	16
Duncan Bypass.....	18
Appendix: Mapping Questions	20

Executive Summary

As part of the ongoing community consultation regarding the development of the Cowichan Koksilah Official Community Plan, a number of “Discovery Cafes” were held in November 2016 to address questions that emerged from the earlier phases of community consultation, including the surveys. These meetings were designed to address specific issues: aging in place, residential uses on agricultural lands, wetlands protection, Duncan bypass, and making it safer to walk, cycle, and ride within Area E.

The Discovery Cafes also included the opportunity for input into policies related to mapping or land use designations within certain areas. Unfortunately there was not enough participation in these exercises to provide any validity to the results. Therefore they are not reported. However, the mapping questions are included as an Appendix at the end of this report.

Please note that as you, the reader, are going through the document in detail, any use of the word “I” indicates the perspective of the table host for that particular session, and not the views of the CVRD.

Aging in Place

The OCP policy framework needs to reflect the variety of needs for rural residents to be able to age in place. Housing, in particular, requires flexibility in the consideration of options:

- The encouragement of alternative housing types, such as co-housing¹ or tiny homes,
- Flexibility in retrofitting homes or trails to accommodate walkers and wheelchairs,
- Provision for on-site accommodation of care providers,
- Development of small continuum of care campuses, and
- Multiple dwelling units on single properties to permit inter-generational housing.

Additional considerations include the need for service provision in the rural areas for people wanting to continue to live at home so they aren’t required to go into town to access services, similar to the “HUB” in Cowichan Station, and the need for more flexibility in transportation choices.

Residential Uses on Agricultural Lands

Everyone agreed that productive agricultural lands need to be protected, and the OCP policy framework needs to recognize the need for multiple revenue streams to support on-farm agricultural activity, such as agri-tourism, or rental housing.

¹ Cohousing describes neighbourhoods that combine the autonomy of private dwellings with the advantages of shared resources and community living. For more information visit the Canadian Cohousing Network website at <http://cohousing.ca/>.

Suggested options for balancing the two apparently competing demands include:

- Considering a “homeplate” policy which encourages all residential development to occur in close proximity to itself and its services,
- Covenant “no subdivision” at the time the building permit is issued for second residential structures,
- OCP policy to support innovative land use and homeownership options,
- Use development permit areas to place homes in the least impactful places, and
- Permit tiny homes as a non-permanent housing option for farm land.

Wetlands Protection

To support wetlands protection, a combined educational, monitoring, and policy/regulation framework needs to be developed, working in collaboration with NGOs and other community groups. Whatcom County, in Washington State, may serve as a model for the CVRD. It has done some very unique things to protect and enhance wetlands in terms of educational components and also tax support for wetlands protection initiatives.

Any OCP policy should:

- Recognize that wetlands are dynamic systems, with wildlife habitat values as well as value to human beings,
- Recognize the role of wetlands in groundwater recharge, in terms of both quality and quantity, and avoid compromise of water resources,
- Provide clear definitions of the various types of wetlands, including their riparian areas,
- Reference stewardship manuals and guidelines, including the *Develop With Care* manual,
- Discuss how to take care of or enhance wetlands, i.e. provide stewardship guidelines, and possibly work with NGO’s or other community groups to monitor wetland health,
- Be results-based: science and good management working together,
- Possibly require covenanting to protect wetlands on properties (when approvals required, for example),
- Provide for enforcement of policies and regulation,
- Consider the downstream effects of any proposed developments, and
- Explore the potential for tax incentives for leaving wetlands in an undisturbed state.

Duncan Bypass

There is a lot of uncertainty as to whether or not a Duncan Bypass route is likely to be built. But if it is built, there is no uncertainty about its impacts on the landscape, wildlife, lifestyle, and other amenities enjoyed by Area E residents. The consensus appears to be that a policy about the possible Duncan Bypass should be put into the OCP, based on community views and values, and constructive rather than negative in nature. And the community would like to participate in the decision-making process.

By constructive, the community members appear to mean that the policy should require a full discussion of an inclusive set of costs and benefits of various options for a bypass. These could

include alternatives that would make requiring a bypass unnecessary, such as increased investment in public transportation to reduce traffic congestion, or better options for cycling, riding, walking, using scooters, etc. Another alternative would be to upgrade the corridor through Duncan, to eliminate the need for a rural bypass.

Other policies within the OCP should more obliquely address the Duncan Bypass by discussing the negative impacts of increased highway traffic through a rural area. Examples included that the OCP should contain language that supports the suppression of noise (specifically “percussion” noises) in rural areas as well as air pollution. Lastly, the development of roads would place much higher residential development pressure on surrounding lands, which could destroy the character of the area.

Safer Walking, Cycling, and Riding within Area E

While there was some discussion of recreational options for walking, cycling, and riding, the bulk of the discussion focused on better non-motorized connectivity between people and destinations. For example, the “spur line” trail which could provide an off-road connection between Glenora and Cowichan Station, or making better use of existing rights-of-way to provide off-road opportunities for people. For example, the road between Glenora and Duncan used to be wide enough to allow people to walk to town safely, but this has changed over time. The preference is to have a zone of separation between the paved roadway and the adjacent trail, allowing for some landscape between.

Bike lanes along Cowichan Lake Road were identified as a priority. Generally speaking, lack of road cleaning was identified as an important issue; it creates an unsafe situation for people wanting to ride their bikes because of the accumulation of debris.

All specific input regarding trails has been provided to the CVRD’s Parks Division for inclusion in the Area E Parks and Trails Master Plan, which is in development at the same time as the OCP.

Conclusions

These ideas will be evaluated in the development of OCP policy, and may be reflected in the policy solutions which are ultimately developed. The draft OCP should be ready for community review by the fall of 2017!

Glenora, November 3, 2016

- Attended by 11 residents of the area, and supported by 6 CVRD staff/volunteers
- Held at the Glenora Hall in Glenora
- Worked with participants as a single group
- Mapping exercise was located at a separate table; a number of people participated (but very few)

Trails and Alternative Forms of Transportation

Glenora is a well-loved recreation area, hosting trail runs, marathons, and other events from all over southern Vancouver Island. It is perceived as a safe place to have these events because of low traffic on the roads, and lots of off-road trails. The one critique of the trail system that came up at the meeting is that it needs more signage so that people know where they are when they are on the trails, to make the community more tourist friendly.

Nevertheless, there is always room for more off-road connectivity. There was support for adding the “spur line” trail, which is (apparently) officially owned by MOTI, and runs from Glenora to Cowichan Bay, to the official trail network. It is still largely useful, although some farmers have placed gates or fences along the route. Part of this trail is located on reserve lands, and there is evidence that it has been claimed back by Cowichan Tribes, since the land for the trail was originally used as a rail line. This recommendation will be brought to the attention of the Parks Department.

Historically the road was wide enough to allow people to walk to town safely, but over time that has changed. There was support for the idea of pathways along roadways throughout the region. Cowichan Tribes has an award-winning [Transportation Plan](#) which indicates that they have a plan for improving walking and cycling within the region. The CVRD may have some opportunity to collaborate with them, and achieve benefits for residents throughout the area, to have enhanced infrastructure for alternative forms of transportation.

There is also support for resuming train service as an option to get vehicles off the road. Another option would be to investigate the potential for a shuttle service of some type, which would reduce the number of vehicles, and would (potentially) aid with aging in place.

There was a lot of support for creating a pedestrian/bicycle/equestrian bridge across the Cowichan River to make it easier for people to reach other parts of the Cowichan Valley, without having to travel through Duncan. This could serve as an alternative to the Duncan Bypass for cars.

Duncan Bypass

There was some discussion about the potential for a bypass of the Duncan area, and whether or not a policy should be put into the OCP about it. Generally, there was support for this initiative, with members of the group believing that it was definitely going to be built, while others believe that it is not likely to be built, at least not in the near future.

If a policy about the Duncan Bypass is put into the OCP, it should be based on community views and values, encouraging a cost-benefit analysis of the values which would be lost (including the safety of the place as an area to have major events, and its tourism basis, and impacts to farming and the Agricultural Land Reserve). Additionally, the policy should link land use and transportation planning, including alternative forms of transportation (cycling, riding, walking, using scooters, etc.), to prevent development along the corridor that would negate the utility of the bypass (as in Nanaimo, or as is the currently situation in Duncan, where the current location of the highway was the bypass, when it was built). Lastly, the community would like to be kept informed, so that it would be in a position to participate in the decision-making process.

Director Alison Nicholson indicated that she was trying to organize a meeting with MOTI to discuss a number of issues, in which she was supported by the group.

Wetlands Protection

There was a lot of discussion about the differences between natural and manmade wetlands, and the ebbing and flowing of wetlands within the lifetimes of people participating in the meeting. Some wetlands were created by the installation of the rail lines (Rowe Road to the trail head and Vaux Road were specifically mentioned as examples), which changed the flow of water which resulted in wetlands. Other wetlands are drying up or being “choked out” by the growth of vegetation, which in turn affected bird and mammal (minks and other critters) habitat (Elliott Road was specifically mentioned). The “Beaver legend” was also mentioned ... with an area being transformed, apparently by a beaver, but nobody ever seeing it.

There was interest in the proposed wetlands study, in terms of the scale of the mapping, etc. There was also a lot of discussion about the need to educate people as to the benefits of wetlands. Any OCP policy should:

- Reference stewardship manuals and guidelines, including the *Develop With Care* manual
- Discuss how to take care of or enhance wetlands, i.e. provide stewardship guidelines, and possibly work with NGO's or other community groups to monitor wetland health
- Recognize that they are dynamic systems
- Be result-based: science and good management working together
- Possibly require covenanting to protect wetlands on properties (when approvals required, for example)

Recommendation that the example of Whatcom County (Washington State) be looked at, both in terms of the educational components and the tax support for wetlands protection initiatives.

Given the role of some wetlands in groundwater recharge, the issue of groundwater quality and quantity was also discussed in relationship to well water, which is highly variable within the Glenora area.

The need to find ways to provide corridors and connectivity between wetlands for wildlife was also recognized. Wetlands also provide habitat for migratory birds, which needs to be protected.

Residential Uses on Agricultural Lands

There seemed to be recognition of the need for more flexibility around questions of residential uses on agricultural lands, as well as recognition of the risks. Even with farm status, multiple revenue streams are required to support agricultural activity. Tourism, agri-tourism specifically, is one renewable industry and economic resource for some farms. B&B's are needed to provide accommodation for the small-scale tourist market that exists, and could be developed further without negatively impacting the current lifestyles within Glenora, because they blend in well with the existing community. It was also recognized that historically rural areas supported much larger populations than they do now.

One option is to consider a "homeplate" policy, which encourages all residential development to occur in close proximity to itself and its services, such as septic systems and driveways, thereby limiting subdivision potential. If additional housing is permitted, another option would be to covenant "no subdivision" at the time that the building permit is issued. It was noted that while the local government has no discretion regarding the people involved with different types of land use, the ALC does have this discretion, which is confusing. Example: The ALC can make a variety of land use decisions based on the people who are making the application, i.e. if they owned the property prior to 1972; if the application is being made for family members; etc. But local governments do not have this flexibility. Policy and decisions must be based exclusively on the land use.

There was an extensive discussion about specific examples of land ownership: corporate, cooperative, joint tenancy, etc. It was recommended that a policy be put into the OCP about innovative land use and homeownership options.

Aging in Place

It was noted that the question of residential uses of agricultural lands is related to questions of aging in place, particularly for aging farmers. Multiple housing units could permit inter-generational succession on the farm, or permit farmers to continue to live on the land they love, while leasing/selling to people who will take over the management (or ownership) of the farm.

There are a variety of models of alternative housing within the CVRD's rural areas: Glenora Farm, OUR Ecovillage, Elkington Forest, and others ... The policy framework needs to set the stage for encouraging alternative housing types. One example is Co-housing (Sooke example), which is established deliberately for aging in place. The [Sooke Harbourside](#) example showcases how one group of people have planned for their transitions at the end of the life, while at the same time, reducing their footprint on the land.

Cowichan Station, November 5, 2016

- Attended by 6 residents of the area and supported by 6 CVRD staff/volunteers
- Held at The HUB in Cowichan Station
- Worked with participants as a single group
- Started with mapping exercise for Cowichan Station, and discussion about land use and the nature of the community

- Then discussion moved to discuss the core questions for the meeting

Meeting participants see Cowichan Station as a model complete rural community: creative, progressive, and well put together. With the addition of the HUB to the community, it has good basic services, a grocery store nearby (Great Greens Farm Market), and good non-car options for transportation, although there was some discussion about safety aspects of riding one's bike or horse along the roads. One value that was particularly identified was the ability to see stars at night. The beauty of the landscape was identified as supporting creativity and mental health of community members.

Key issues for Cowichan Station

1. Water, specifically drinking water:
 - a. Quality and quantity vary widely
 - b. Small community system is needed
 - c. Agricultural watering uses drawn down the aquifer dramatically in the summer
 - d. Water provides drinking water and also ecological services – need to provide for both types of uses
 - e. Water is of primary importance in our decision-making – with climate change and changing water profiles, conflict is likely to become more pronounced – need a framework to deal with it.
2. Sewer or septic services – a number of the lots are too small for both a well and a septic system
3. Transportation
 - a. One participant challenged the group to identify the best things about the transportation options in Cowichan Station. Responses:
 - i. There is connectivity, different ways to travel to get places
 - ii. Bus schedule is moderately good
 - iii. Beauty
 - b. Bus is scheduled too infrequently to be fully useful – better services would be helpful
 - i. BC Transit
 - ii. Entrepreneurial response²
 - iii. Need for a seamless service
 - c. Train is not operational, but if it could be scheduled to allow people to make day trips to Victoria for shopping or medical appointments, that would be great.
 - i. Island Corridor needs to be protected
 - ii. If train ever runs again, could create a station for tourists in Cowichan Station – a perfect drop off point for agri-tourism and other types of tourists (small-scale, not mass tourism)
 - iii. Perhaps some transit-oriented development around the train station?
 - d. Road maintenance on rural roads:
 - i. Roads never get swept – debris washes off with rains

“A small farm is a good way to limit inheritance.” – Attribution unknown.

² Dylan, Tofino Bus, is an example of such an entrepreneurial response to the need for transportation.

- ii. Occasionally a scraper will come by to take off the worst deposits
 - iii. Would like MOTI to partner with HUB to scrape the parking lot when it snows
 - iv. Logging issues along Mountain Road area – inconclusive regarding whether or not paving is desirable³
 - e. There is a need for off-road trails
- 4. Cell phone coverage needs to be more complete
 - a. People are moving away from land lines
- 5. Land economics work against young people having access to land to farm – How to enable access to land without compromising agricultural values?
 - a. In the past more people lived in agricultural areas
 - b. Possible template for inclusion in the OCP: OUR Ecovillage or similar type of limited footprint incursions by residential uses on agricultural lands
 - c. Desire to have multiple dwelling units on single properties, so that individuals can “downsize” on their own property

Aging in Place and Alternative Living Arrangements

Aging in place was identified as a moderately complex topic because of the infinite variation in people’s situations as they age: financial abilities, range of services needed, health, and so on. Therefore a range of services are needed to meet the needs of people who are aging in their own homes and communities. One participant observed that home-based businesses can allow seniors to stay at home longer, because their financial reserves can extend further if they are also bringing in an earned income. Another observed that home support services can be unreliable, and need to be managed.

Some of the policies which could be developed around aging in place include:

1. Flexibility for retrofitting homes or trailers to accommodate walkers and wheelchairs
2. Provision for on-site accommodation of care providers
3. HandyDART service area to include rural areas⁴
4. Development of continuum of care campuses⁵ around the Valley, so that when people have to leave their home, they don’t have to leave their community. Their friends can still come to visit, etc.
5. See also the comments above regarding multiple dwelling units on single properties. Such an initiative could permit inter-generational housing, as well as provide for succession planning through mentorship and other types of relationships and support for young people who are wishing to buy a farm from retiring farmers. It can also provide rental housing on farm, which can serve as an income-generator for a senior continuing to live on the property.
 - a. Principles to build into the OCP re multiple dwelling units on agricultural lands:
 - i. Don’t jeopardize agricultural and ecological productivity of the land

³ One person indicated that it would be desirable, and another said that gravel was better than paving.

⁴ Need to check limitations on pickup based on geography.

⁵ Sunridge was an example of this type of facility, done as a private business.

- ii. Ensure that the uses for these dwellings will be to facilitate productivity of land
 - b. Could look at zoning for a floor area ratio (maximum area) for housing, rather than density (number of units)
- 6. Tiny homes can be on trailers or skids to be cheap – to be legal, they need to be attached to a foundation.
- 7. Models of housing for aging in place:
 - a. Abbeyfield
 - b. Co-housing
 - c. Cooperatives
 - d. OUR Ecovillage

Trails and Other Transportation Options

1. Building off-road trails:
 - a. Standards discussion underway between CVRD Parks and MOTI
 - b. Example: Community Pathways on Salt Spring Island, working with MOTI
 - c. Gabriola example (RD Nanaimo), working with private landowners
2. The Wooden Bridge needs a heritage bylaw: old, wood, traffic-calming
3. Duncan Bypass:
 - a. As highways expand, the number of cars also expands
 - b. Need to do a cost-benefit analysis comparing road expansion to increased investment in public transportation
 - c. Would create less room for wildlife
 - d. Would put pressure on local governments to allow more development near the bypass
 - e. Put these alternatives into the policy – have a constructive policy rather than just negative

General Advice for the OCP

1. Avoid excess development
 - a. Think of the ecology as a whole, and people's place within it
 - b. Keep space for other species (wildlife corridors, etc.)
 - c. Don't silo the issues
2. Avoid creating a situation that lends itself to doctrinaire reasons for turning down applications (rules overcoming common sense) – be sure to include an evaluation of land productive capability as part of any application process – look to the measurement of impacts rather than blanket rules and regulations⁶
3. Stop planning to the lowest common denominator
4. Avoid compromise of water resources, and take the power to regulate as indicated under the Water Sustainability Act (attribution to Deborah Curran, University of Victoria Environmental Law Centre) – but allow for dugouts for capturing rainwater and other agricultural supports
 - a. There are barriers to water conservation built into existing policy

⁶ The work of Anna and Gord Baird in the District of Highlands was referenced in this conversation.

- b. Put enabling conditions into policy, and Development Permits (?)
 - c. Recognize that systems of measurement are needed (and data is mostly not available, although tools are)
- 5. Address issues of migratory pathways for wildlife (wildlife corridors), and address ungulate grazing grounds and other wildlife needs
- 6. Reach large landowners to be sure their input is received
 - a. A group-based Environmental Farm Plan has been undertaken with the dairy farmers in the area. Key issues include water consumption and reduction of pollution. The farmers will be making farm improvements to address these issues as appropriate on their individual farms.

Sahtlam, November 15, 2016

- Attended by 31 residents of the area and supported by 7 CVRD staff/volunteers
- Held at the Sahtlam Fire Hall
- Originally planned method used was used, with 5 questions, and people rotating between discussions, with an additional table for individual mapping work
 1. Wetlands and sensitive ecosystem protection: What values are we trying to protect? How do we want to protect those values? What is the role of the community? Government? Environmental organizations?
 2. Residential uses on agricultural lands (temporary farm worker housing, agri-tourism accommodations, multiple residence for multiple family farming operations): What advice would the community like to provide to the Agricultural Land Commission and the CVRD on this question?
 3. Aging in place: What are the barriers to aging in place? What supports need to be put in place to allow residents to age in place?
 4. Alternative forms of transportation: What needs to be done to make walking, riding, and cycling safer within the Plan area?
 5. Roads: There is a lot of talk about the Duncan Bypass. What should the OCP say about it?
 6. There was also a mapping table for people to respond to specific mapping questions about their community (or other communities). Mapping questions in the Appendix.

Wetlands

Wetlands are currently protected by the Riparian Areas Regulation (RAR) if they are connected by surface flow to a fish-bearing stream. One of the tasks being undertaken as part of the OCP project is to map all the wetlands in the Plan Area, as part of a larger hydrologic mapping initiative. Advice from the community included:

1. Provide clear definitions of wetlands – everything is connected; riparian areas are also important
2. Ensure enforcement of local government and provincial regulations – need some teeth in the OCP, as well as encouragement to the Province to enforce their own regulations
3. Consider the downstream effects of any proposed developments, even between jurisdictions

4. Work to educate the public on the importance of wetlands
5. Explore the potential for tax incentives for leaving wetlands in undisturbed state
6. Rezoning applications should involve donation of wetland/corridors to CVRD for preservation
7. Work with/support local NGO's and conservation groups to promote public education
8. Respect private property rights when developing policy and regulations

Improving Active Transportation Options

The availability of trails for recreation or active transportation connections was recognized as extremely important for the community for health and safety reasons and for reducing our carbon footprint. Off road trails/pathways are the preference, where possible, for safety reasons. Planning to enable more loop routes is desirable. The need to plan with adjacent jurisdictions would improve travel options. For example, a trail connection to the new hospital should be part of the plan. The points raised through the Sahtlam café discussions are summarized below for off-road and on-road situations.

Off-Road

Sahtlam has the Trans Canada Trail (TCT) which is valued for both recreation and as a travel route to town. Commentary about the TCT included:

- Great surface, and railway grade
- Needs better access/connections to commercial areas, e.g. going downtown or to 49th Parallel grocery, or to Berkey's corner and access points to other roads, like Menzies. Right now people cut across private property
- Improve the staging area at Sahtlam Road/Tensor connector, which is seen as a "wasteland"
- Where roads are used as part of the trail, they need to be safer, with better lighting
- Residential uses backing on trails decreases privacy, but it benefits health
- Trail lighting is discouraged

There was also a considerable discussion about allowing ATVs to use off-road trails and there was general agreement that motorized use in select locations with strict speed limits should be supported and would help reduce environmental damage caused by riders trying to get around the existing barriers. Points raised included:

- Off-road ATV represents a \$6.7 billion contribution into the Canadian economy⁷
- Licensing is important
- The Kettle Valley Trail allows ATVs in certain areas
- We should allow ATV use within specific areas, with ways to get there
- Provides another tourism option
- Need low speed limit
 - Speed limits not currently enforced.

⁷ From a 2016 report prepared for the Canadian Off-Highway Vehicle Distributors Council, by Smith Gunther Associates Ltd., entitled "National, Provincial, and Territorial Economic Impacts of ATVs and Side-by-Sides 2015: Final Report."

And, similar to the Glenora meeting, there was discussion about the need to provide signage even for small footpaths, to assist people to find trails and to assist people with finding their way back again.

Specific to Cowichan Station it was noted that that area has limited off-road travel options. However, any thoughts about a trail along the river would be problematic because of farm security concerns.

On-Road

Issues related to lack of shoulder maintenance, or general deterioration of the road shoulders, within a context of increased car traffic, were identified as making use of the shoulders hazardous.^[1] For roadside pathways, the preference is to have a zone of separation, with landscape between vehicular traffic and the pathway. Participants advocated reclaiming the road rights-of-way as a starting point for better active transportation connectivity. Pursuing land donations where necessary to enable pathways will be important.

In terms of priority roadside pathways, participants identified the following as the highest priority:

1. Riverbottom to the Sahtlam Firehall: The section along Cowichan Lake Road near Currie Parks needs to be made safe, with planks over ditches, etc.
2. The Trans Canada highway to Bright Angel Park, along Koksilah Road

Cowichan Lake Road was identified as unsafe (“terrifying”) for users of alternative transportation methods. Bike lanes should be a priority along this roadway.

Aging in Place

The discussions around the question of “Aging in Place” revolved around three major topic areas: provision of services, transportation, and housing accommodations. For Sahtlam in particular, there is a need for a “hub” or centre⁸ to coordinate health and other services provision for older people wanting to continue to live at home. This might include some shopping (local farm store), a mobile library (bookmobile), a tool lending library⁹, health services, meals, fitness and other classes, and so on. There might also be a “Nurse Next Door” office, which can send professional nursing care to provide health services in homes. It might include a medical clinic or pharmacy, so that people could get their flu shots or medications close to home. There might be space for physical therapists or counsellors to work in the community as well.

One suggestion is that an addition to the Fire Hall be built to accommodate such a centre for the community. In addition, participants suggested an adult exercise facility in Currie Park.

^[1] This also came up in the context of the Aging in Place discussion, with the observation that reflective striping on the roadside, with “cats-eyes” in the middle, would assist people to stay on the roads in the dark of a winter’s night.

⁸ Direct reference was made to the Cowichan Station Hub, which is seen as a model for a rural community centre.

⁹ A tool lending library is similar to a book library. A selection of tools is available to borrow. People borrow them (sign them out), and then return them for others to use.

Another aid to people feeling safe to stay in their homes might be a Block Watch or similar program focused on the needs of elderly people living in their rural homes.

Housing

Nearby to this centre, a variety of housing types need to be available. The zoning should be flexible to allow for cooperative housing arrangements, or multi-family arrangements, to provide for caregivers to live on-site. Caregivers might be family members, or they might live in a secondary suite in the same house. It was suggested that zoning be tightened to reduce the risk of abuse of housing put in place to accommodate people aging in place. Covenants might be used, for example, to assist with regulating residential uses in the rural areas.¹⁰

The OCP should call for more housing to be developed using universal design accessibility standards. The OCP should also recognize the potential need for assisted living facilities within the community.

The OCP should also recognize that housing options for people to age in place represent a spectrum of possible needs, from assistance with various tasks in the home¹¹ to assisted living centres. Some options between these two ends of the spectrum include purpose-built co-housing¹² for people who are aging,

Transportation

Public transportation needs to move away from standardized busses on standardized routes, towards more shuttle services, with more frequent services and more stops (to reduce lengthy walks to a bus stop), and allowing for flagging down the bus. This is different from HandyDART, which provides somewhat personalized transportation services, with door-to-door service, but users must qualify and register to be eligible to use the service.

Roads should be built with wider shoulders for alternative transportation methods (walkers, scooters, walking the dog, etc.)

The participants recommend that roads should be upgraded with reflective strips on the sides of the roads, and cats-eyes in the middle, to improve visibility at night.

Residential Uses on Agricultural Lands

With regards to the bylaws for ALR, the general opinion was that the bylaws were too stern and the application process to construct other housing accommodation on ALR land was a difficult

¹⁰ The Covenant suggestion was so that when the elderly person with the 'rezoned' lot (to allow a 2nd suite or new building) has to sell, the rezoning allowance is removed. This discussion revolved around selling/leasing part of the lot to a younger couple who could help out keeping the farm/property running but as payment would get equity in the property and have the 1st option of buying it all when the ageing person died/sold. The discussion got a little complicated and needs a thorough discussion by zoning/bylaw/legal experts to see how it might work.

¹¹ Volunteer Cowichan's Better at Home program connects seniors with bonded trades or service people to assist with common tasks around the house, including gutter cleaning, handyman services, house cleaning, yard work, etc.

¹² Harbourside example in Sooke: <http://www.harbourside.ca/>, which uses the strata model of ownership, with strata fees including a variety of services, as well as maintenance of common areas, including a major common kitchen.

process. Also, many community members were not enthusiastic about applying for extra housing on ALR land because the process was expensive, the possibility of it being approved was slim and there is no reimbursement of the fees if the application is unsuccessful. They also said that many people are in non compliance with the bylaws in that area and nothing is being done to those individuals/property owners.

Secondary dwellings can be important to provide help for labour-intensive farming activities. The CVRD was encouraged to review the rules about dwellings on agricultural lands, to be more flexible and supportive of increased housing, both types and number of dwelling units. For example, many temporary farm workers are unpaid,¹³ ex WWOOFers, and part of the bargain for the farmers is that they provide accommodations in exchange for free labour. They cannot afford to find accommodations off the farm, the farmer needs them on-farm to work both early and late, and the margins on farming today, particularly with the high cost of land, mean that many farmers do not have a lot of cash to be providing their temporary farm workers with wages that would allow them to pay market rents.

Another example is the needs of aging farmers who need help to stay in their homes, or to keep the farms in production. In this latter case, young farmers could come on the land to keep it in production, while the older farmers are able to continue living in their homes. Having a secondary dwelling on the farm might make it more feasible for multi-generational families to live together, again enabling the older people to remain in their homes at the end of their lives.

People do not want to leave their communities as they age. In the case of seniors living on agricultural lands, it would be helpful to be able to add more residences on site for their family members, which could allow multi-generational living on the farm, providing care for seniors as well.

Some other reasons for constructing secondary dwellings was for security purposes, increasing density in the area, keeping family closer and developing a community feel. Community members want to protect the agricultural potential of their properties, but have concerns when land is not farmable. Within the ALR, lands that are not suitable for agriculture could be excluded or used for other purposes. It was argued that some parcels are too small for agricultural production.

Agri-tourism is a way for farmers to develop additional, farm-related revenue streams. It would probably be helpful for some farmers to be able to offer accommodation on the farm, to keep the tourists longer and spending more money at the farm. Different types of accommodation should be permitted, including B&B's, camping and RV stays.

Tiny homes are another option, allowing non-permanent housing options for farm land. Such housing provides options for farms to grow and shrink as demand for housing grows and

¹³ **WWOOF organisations** connect people who want to live and learn on organic farms and smallholdings with people who are looking for volunteer help. **WWOOF hosts** offer food, accommodation and opportunities to learn about organic lifestyles. **Volunteers** give hands on help in return. (<http://wwooftinternational.org/>) WWOOF stands for World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms.

shrinks. They could also provide some level of income for farmers who are starting out. Composting toilets in association with tiny homes would reduce the impact of additional density further, as would greywater recycling to decrease water consumption.

Development permit areas on agricultural land are a good idea to help preserve the best farm land, and place homes in the least impactful places. There is a strong desire to protect ALR lands, to ensure that we have food growing areas as a way of providing food security.¹⁴

Participants recommended that each community be developed as a “hamlet”, to provide a heart or centre place within rural areas.

Duncan Bypass

- Cobble Hill-Copper Canyon (Hillcrest area through Chemainus River) connector would be of less impact to the communities if the Province decides that a major new bypass route is required
- Any highways work in the area should emphasize connectivity within the community before division of the community by a major new highway corridor
- A toll road to Victoria that bypasses not only Duncan but Goldstream Park was proposed – this would be designated as the truck route and leave the present corridor for cars only. One concern over this idea is the huge cost and also the likelihood that the toll would be a major disincentive to its use once constructed.
- One person opposed to the West Route options proposed in the Urban Systems report (2005) said that a bypass is needed, but that the solution is to use the existing alignment, eliminating driveway accesses off the Trans-Canada Highway as well as stoplights being eliminated between the Silver Bridge and Beverly Street, or further north. Existing businesses could have “backage roads” that allow them to reorient their facades to face away from the highway.
- Most of the present highway commercial buildings are older and likely nearing the end of their useful lifespans, so this could present an opportunity for the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure to acquire one side of the highway and use this space to put express lanes in the middle (4) and then a one way system of frontage roads on either side.
- It was noted that the MoT is not presently proposing anything in the area but one couple who are active in BC Liberal politics indicated that this could change soon.
- The new hospital location was touted as a reason to have a bypass, to give alternate routes across the Cowichan River and better hospital access as a safety feature.
- In the event any new bypass is built, a route should be chosen that has the minimal impact upon the community, maintaining rural character and with highly restricted access and commercial land use exclusion areas to prevent strip development.
- Rural communities should not have to sacrifice their lifestyle in favour of urban areas. One of the bypass routes in North Cowichan was blocked and this shifts the options westward to the Plan Area.

¹⁴ The participants referenced the much quoted statistic of only 3 days of food in the grocery stores, should the worst happen.

- MoT needs to have a fully open process regarding the bypass route issue.
- The OCP should contain language that supports the suppression of noise (specifically “percussion” noises) in rural areas as well as air pollution, which would support local values as well as mitigate against a bypass route in the Plan area.
- The problem is too many stoplights along the TCH in Duncan. The flow capacity of Goldstream Park may be the same as Duncan because of this, despite the park area only having two lanes.
- Ring roads and bypasses are enormously costly and simply redirect development pressures to fringe areas. They don’t make sense.
- The proposed long routes seem unnecessarily long. This makes them more expensive, but they also pass through rural areas where residents are used to quiet. The shorter routes will cost fewer dollars and they still bypass the city. And they pass through suburban neighbourhoods where traffic noise and density is already higher. So the OCP should protect the peace and quiet of rural neighbourhoods and limit costs by bypassing only the densest part of that section of Highway 1.
- Map wetlands and wells before any alternative route is chosen. Learn from Burns Bog, where Highway 17 has major engineering problems related to subsidence.
- Respect the watershed and First Nations in any routing considerations.
- MoT should provide a clear rationale for their preferred option.
- Traffic management may be the solution.
- Having just moved here from the Vancouver area, believe me, there is not a traffic problem in Duncan.
- Use existing alignment for upgrades, although commercial properties would experience short term impacts.
- Construct an interchange at the Silver Bridge and another at Thrifty’s or further north, with no exists or entrances in between.
- Bypass is a good idea but it should be located in the Maple Bay side of North Cowichan because that is the side of Duncan where most residential growth is already happening.

Overall there was no consensus but the themes I heard again and again were that the existing alignment can be improved to a much more serviceable standard, the OCP should protect the rural area’s interests and recommend that the lower cost and more sensible upgrade of the existing alignment be the top priority.

Appendix: Mapping Questions

Respondents can draw on the provided maps to indicate their preferences, or write on the back of the map the location that they have in mind, i.e. an intersection, and provide any comments.

Paldi

- Where should the community (commercial and public use) centre be located?
- What is a good level of development for this area? (Tell us the area it could occupy, or the number of houses or lots that you think should be built)

Sahtlam

- During the community consultation, the community identified the need for a small local serving commercial area. Draw a line around the area where you think that it should be located.
- Should a village centre be located around this small commercial area? If so, should it have residential? If so, should the residential be large or small lots?

Glenora

- Glenora is located almost entirely within the ALR. Is there a need for more types of services in the Glenora community? What are they? Where should they be located?

Wherever you go ...

There you are!

Cowichan Station

- Cowichan Station is entirely surrounded by the ALR.
- What types of additional services are required within Cowichan Station?

Eagle Heights

- Eagle Heights and the Koksilah Industrial Park are entirely surrounded by the ALR or Indian reserve lands.
- Is there a need for increased density (opportunities for more people to live) within Eagle Heights? Secondary suites? Apartment blocks? Townhouses?
- Is there a need for more commercial activity within Eagle Heights or the Koksilah Industrial Park? If so, where?
- Are there any uses that should not be permitted in the area?