

ELECTORAL AREA B – SHAWNIGAN LAKE

SUMMARY FORM ATTACHMENT

This attachment to the Housing Needs Assessment Report Summary Form provides the long-form answers that did not fit within the space available on the form.

Briefly summarize the following:

1. Housing policies in local official community plans and regional growth strategies:

The Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD) is currently harmonizing seven electoral area official community plans (OCPs) and eight zoning bylaws into one Official Community Plan for the Electoral Areas (HOCP). The HOCP Draft Bylaw 4270 has been given second reading at the time this report has been drafted.

Currently, electoral area B is still covered by the South Cowichan OCP Bylaw 3520, which also covers electoral areas A and C. Goals, objectives and policies related to housing in the South Cowichan OCP are summarized below.

Of the 12 goals in the South Cowichan OCP, only one directly addresses housing: “To improve housing affordability and provide a diverse range of housing types to accommodate a diverse population”.

Section 8 of the South Cowichan OCP, Social Sustainability, includes objectives and policies on housing, including “to encourage the provision of a diverse range of housing types and tenures, including affordable, rental and special needs housing, to allow for residents to remain in the community throughout their life stages.”

Within section 8, policy 8.7 addresses how the Regional Board will assist in the provision of affordable housing. This includes encouraging subsidized, cooperative and non-market affordable housing units; designating land for multiple family, affordable and seniors housing; allowing secondary suites and accessory dwelling units; creating an affordable housing reserve fund; establishing a land bank; collaborating with senior governments, community groups, non-profit agencies and the private sector; and participating in the Regional Affordable Housing Directorate or establishing a CVRD advisory group.

In addition, policy 8.1 outlines that the provision of subsidized or affordable housing is considered an amenity to which new development could contribute. Note that the HOCP has not included any amenity policies. The Regional Board will separately consider an amenity policy for all electoral areas concurrent with the adoption of Bylaw 4270.

2. Any community consultation undertaken during development of the housing needs report:

The project team developed a communications and engagement plan to guide public, stakeholder and First Nations engagement in the process. This plan was presented to the Electoral Area Services Committee on July 15, 2020. Given the COVID-19 health context and ministerial order limiting the size of gatherings, public, stakeholder and First Nations engagement on this project was focused on online, phone and virtual engagement activities designed to gather qualitative information on current and future housing needs and opportunities.

Residents from across the CVRD, including all nine electoral areas and four member

municipalities, were invited to participate in an online PlaceSpeak questionnaire that ran from September 1 to October 13, 2020. Residents were also invited to participate in a Placelt activity, where they indicated on a map what kind of housing is needed where and why. Over that time, 251 residents participated in the online questionnaire or Placelt activity, including nine who submitted paper copies of the questionnaire. Of those who completed the online questionnaire, 82 questionnaire participants from the electoral areas, of which 12 were from electoral area B.

Advertisements raising awareness of the process and promoting the questionnaire ran from mid-August to mid-October in the following publications:

- Cowichan Valley Citizen
- Shawnigan Focus
- Lake Cowichan Gazette
- Chemainus Valley Courier
- Ladysmith Chronicle
- Valley Voice

The questionnaire was also promoted through the CVRD and member municipality social media accounts (Facebook and Twitter) in a series of posts with accompanying graphics and animations.

The CVRD Housing Needs Assessment webpage (cvrd.bc.ca/housingneeds) was the central online hub of information on the project and linked to a Placespeak project page, the online questionnaire and Placelt exercise. This same information was also available on member municipality webpages.

3. Any consultation undertaken with persons, organizations and authorities (e.g. local governments, health authorities and the provincial and federal governments and their agencies).

- Key Stakeholder Interviews: A series of background interviews were conducted with key stakeholders to better understand the current state of housing and trends in market and non-market housing. Stakeholders from 33 organizations were invited to participate including community organizations, housing organizations, housing providers and developers.
- Community Cafés: Three virtual Community Cafés were carried out to facilitate discussion about current and future housing needs, separated into the following three themes:
 - Health
 - Youth/families
 - Economy

60 organizations were invited to Community Cafés and 16 organizations participated.

Health authorities, community health organizations and First Nation health organizations were invited to participate on the health-focused Community Café.

Youth-specific organizations, community service organizations, school districts and independent schools were invited to the youth and family-focused event.

Developers, local chambers of commerce, Realtors, First Nations, business improvement associations and tourism organizations were invited the economy-focused event.

4. Any consultation undertaken with First Nations:

Letters were mailed to the chiefs and staff of the following nine First Nations formally inviting them to participate in the process:

- Cowichan Tribes
- Ditidaht First Nation
- Halalt First Nation
- Ts'uubaa-asatx Nation
- Lyackson First Nation
- Malahat Nation
- Pauquachin First Nation
- Penelakut Tribe
- Stzu'minus First Nation

The Cowichan Housing Association followed up with all nine and completed eight interviews with housing managers from these First Nations.

Briefly summarize current and anticipated needs for each of the following:

1. Affordable housing:

Quantitative

Renter households in electoral area B making less than \$48,400 per year tend to spend more than 30% of their annual income on housing expenses, placing these households in core housing need, while renter households making less than \$26,600 per year tend to spend more than 50% of their annual income on housing expenses, placing them in extreme core housing need.

Households with annual incomes below \$56,000 will not be able to afford renting in new developments, a possible reason for which is the increasing price of construction and rural services (e.g. septic, well).

Electoral area B has one non-market unit and 28 households receiving rent assistance in the private market from BC Housing.

Qualitative

Engagement results from electoral area B respondents were consistent with those across the CVRD and member municipalities, which identified a need for a spectrum of affordable housing options. Specifically, electoral area B respondents highlighted the need for affordable housing for military veterans as well as housing aimed at low-income families and seniors. Electoral area B respondents suggested a future need for smaller homes such as secondary suites and more diverse housing options to support multigenerational living. Interviewees mentioned the need for more dense development to aid with affordability in electoral area B, but highlighted that inadequate infrastructure and servicing is a barrier to more dense development.

2. Rental housing:

Quantitative

There is insufficient data to calculate the number of rental units, or vacancy rates, within electoral area B. The limited data suggests rental housing is scarce with almost no vacancy (0.2%).

Qualitative

Engagement results from electoral area B respondents are consistent with the broader engagement results that suggest the CVRD is in a state of acute rental shortage with almost no vacancy. Electoral area B respondents share stories of facing barriers to finding rental options including for teachers not housed on campus of the boarding schools in electoral area B, or for families visiting students at boarding school. Respondents also highlight the pressure that vacation homes and vacation rentals put on the available stock of rental housing.

3. Special needs housing:

Quantitative

There is no quantitative data on current or anticipated need for special needs housing for electoral area B.

Qualitative

While electoral area B respondents did not speak to special needs housing, the overall engagement process identified special needs housing as a key component of the housing spectrum, along with a recognition that those with special needs require additional support alongside adequate shelter to ensure long-term safety and success. Interviewees spoke to the need to ensure local special needs housing, distributed through the electoral areas, with proximity to services.

4. Housing for seniors:

Quantitative

Electoral area B has a younger average age than the CVRD, in part due to a far lower percentage of seniors – 13% of the population is 65 years or older in electoral area B, far less than the 23% of the population in the CVRD as a region.

Qualitative

Overall, engagement participants from across the region highlighted the limited availability of assisted care homes and independent living facilities. This shortage has required some seniors to seek supportive housing outside of their communities.

Electoral area B respondents suggested more programs are needed to support ageing in place as residents transition from full-time independent living to more supported living in their own homes.

5. Housing for families:

Quantitative

Electoral area B has a slightly smaller share than other jurisdictions in the region of one-bedroom units (7%) and four-bedroom units (21%) and higher share of three-bedroom units (42%).

Qualitative

While there appears to be an adequate supply of three or more bedroom single-detached homes in electoral area B, housing organizations consulted maintain that many are financially out of reach for families, and that this pressure is increasing as prices rise.

In particular, electoral area B respondents indicated that multigenerational families and low-income families face barriers to finding housing.

6. Shelters for people experiencing homelessness and housing for people at risk of homelessness:

Quantitative

In the latest Homeless Count there was no data provided for electoral area B.¹ However, it is hard to locate and count people who are homeless in rural areas, so there may be additional people experiencing homelessness in electoral area B, especially those who may be considered “hidden homeless” who are more difficult to locate and count.

People who are homeless throughout the CVRD tend to stay close to a community hub where they can access vital services, such as a food bank of which there are none in electoral area B.

Qualitative

Engagement respondents, including those from within electoral area B, highlighted homelessness as a key regional concern. A lack of emergency shelters and long-term options for those experiencing homelessness in the broader region was identified through interviews with housing and community organizations. In particular, engagement results point to a lack of safe housing options for youth, First Nations, women and those with mental health challenges.

Engagement results confirm in many cases electoral area residents are seeking shelter options outside of their communities. Those seeking emergency shelter as well as supportive services frequently travel to Duncan and North Cowichan (particularly the South End), where most programs, shelters and services exist. As a result, these areas are overwhelmed by the demand incurred by out of area residents seeking shelter, with many community organizations indicating a desperate need for additional supports.

7. Any other population groups with specific housing needs identified in the report:

Quantitative

On the housing continuum, housing at the low end of the market ownership segment appears to be plentiful, but supply gaps exist for households making between \$24,800–\$71,800 per year.

Qualitative

Large private boarding schools draw many students who live on campus, as well as teachers. In electoral area B, Shawinigan Lake School operates year-round with 90% of students and 60% of teachers living on campus. Finding adequate, nearby dwellings has been a challenge for teachers, with some commuting from neighbouring communities due to the lack of housing. More short-term housing is needed to accommodate parents/family of resident students visiting locally and internationally.

A safe house currently exists in Duncan.

Were there any other key issues identified through the process of developing your housing needs report?

Transportation

Many community members spoke of a lack of public transportation in electoral area B. Improved proximity to bus routes and other transportation options will be important when considering future housing opportunities in this area.

Maintenance Costs

Many community members who have already paid off their homes spoke to rising costs and challenges maintaining and heating their homes or adapting their homes to meet accessibility challenges.

ⁱ At the time of writing this report, data from the point-in-time homeless count completed in March 2020 was not available for individual jurisdictions.