

NOTES FROM THE OCP COMMUNITY FORUM
HELD ON 2008-APR-10, COMMENCING AT 7:00 PM
AT THE BEBAN PARK SOCIAL CENTRE

PNAC:	B. Anderson B. Holdom (Chair) D. Hill-Turner R. Kelm	R. Meyerhoff D. Mahlum M. Schellinck B. Forbes
Staff:	B. Anderson T. Swabey F. Grant (Recording Secretary)	A. Tucker D. Jensen C. Hall (Recording Secretary)
Councillors	L. Sherry D. Brennan	J. Cameron J. Manhas
Public:	90 (approx.)	

Plan Nanaimo Advisory Committee Chair B. Holdom welcomed the public to the Community Forum, and gave a brief overview on the Official Community Plan 10 Year Review process to date, and the purpose of the Community Forum.

Presentation:

A. Tucker, Director, Planning & Development gave a presentation which outlined:

- Contents of the new draft plan;
- Major differences between the existing plan and new draft plan; and
- Next steps in the process.

Comments and questions from the public:

Resident - Rock City Road

- Attended most of the workshops on the draft plan.
- All of the original language has been removed; this outright elimination is cause for concern.
- Is a rewrite of the previous community plan from 10 years ago.
- So much has been rewritten that it is difficult to know what changes have been made and the reasons for the changes; thinks it was done on purpose to baffle and confuse the citizens.
- Some items that remain in the Plan were issues that were opposed at the workshops.
- How can the City allow such an extensive rewrite of the document without a study of the old plan to see what has worked and what hasn't; then present those findings to the community.
- Goal 5 has been removed in its entirety. This was the way for residents to have control over what we wanted our city to look like.
- A new Goal 4 (Promote a Thriving Economy) was added. Why have this in a land planning document?
- At every workshop, City staff were clearly told to leave the UCB alone but this hasn't happened.
- Plan Nanaimo's original goals may have needed some revisions but not a complete rewrite.
- Hopes the citizens of Nanaimo and elected officials will listen to us.

Resident - Sterling Avenue

- Is very passionate about the environment - Cable Bay is very important to all of us. It is one of the few green spaces left in Nanaimo to enjoy the environment.
- The 'raging grannies' have been chased by guys in trucks and ATVs saying they can't walk in that area (Cable Bay) anymore because it is private property.
- Any land near the pulp mill is probably not fit for people to live on because of the pollution from the mill.
- Regarding food security, you are giving away farm land to developers. All our farm land is being developed. This doesn't make any sense.
- Why are we going to put a water pipeline through Colliery Dam Park?
- Don't like to see trees cut down for no reason, or see ATVs ruining our meadows.
- Don't give away more of our green space.

Resident - Vanderneuk Road

- Thanked all Committee members for the time they have put in on this project.
- Would like to see the new OCP include words that further support the poor in obtaining affordable housing, and we need to address this now.
- Suggest that we look at zoning to make it more plausible for rooming houses to be located throughout the City, and avoid the inner city problems that have occurred in other cities.
- The better care we take of our poor, the better we are as a society; when people have a place to live, you diminish social ills.
- Make more areas of town accessible for affordable and social housing.

Resident - Pheasant Crescent

- Including a Resort designation for Cable Bay on the new OCP map appears to mean that it is a done deal; otherwise it wouldn't be included in the draft plan.

B. Holdom noted:

- Could have proceeded with revision of the plan and not included the Cable Bay application, or put it on as potential change because the application came in before the revision started. As the application involves a boundary extension, this issue has gone to the Province, so it is far from a done deal. A Public Hearing would also occur at a later date if the OCP amendment is approved, followed by submission of rezoning applications.

Resident (cont)

- One of the goals of the UCB is to manage urban growth, but it seems the UCB is going to be extended more and more.
- Will it make any difference to the plan what residents say?

B. Holdom noted:

- PNAC and staff are here to listen and take comments into account. Each part of the process has resulted in changes.

PNAC commented:

- On the Cable Bay application, PNAC was fairly evenly split on whether the application should be approved, with the majority (6 to 5) saying yes.
- Committee members represent all sectors of the community and do their best to listen to all comments.

Resident - Nicol Street

- Agrees with the previous speaker on affordable housing and notes there is mention in the Draft Plan about affordable housing and a mix of housing; but, the Corridors section does not mention a social mix of housing.
- Regarding the Hospital node, is that the only place we are going to have health services? It should be allowed in all nodes.
- Social and community services are not mentioned in the Corridor section.
- Affordable housing is a main concern of social enrichment.
- One policy missing is around minimum standards of maintenance. Has brought this up at a number of meetings, but been told that it is not part of municipal powers.
- The Community Charter states there are ways for municipalities to set up minimum standards bylaws. They are missing in this document. We need to incorporate these things into the new Plan.
- Managing urban growth is not occurring; we can see that in the changes to the UCB.
- There needs to be a lot of changes to this document with more public input.
- Would like to see highlighted what has been changed from the old plan.
- Food security is also important. We are risking that by allowing more farm land to be developed.

B. Holdom noted:

- Council has directed staff to study the rooming house issue and how they can be distributed throughout the community.

Resident - Cutlass Lookout

- Housing prices in Nanaimo are increasing so developers are not building affordable housing.
- What is the City's strategy for creating more social and affordable housing?
- What is Downtown Nanaimo going to look like in five years? With major industry shutting down, what is the economic strategy?

B. Holdom noted:

- Downtown Design Guidelines have just been approved and are available on the City's web site. They outline what we hope the Downtown will look like in the future.

Resident (cont.)

- If industrial operations in the city keep closing, where will people get good paying jobs?

B. Holdom noted:

- planNanaimo, as a land use planning document, can only do so much. The City had a reduced tax rate on industry over the last five years. Sandstone Development includes a light industrial zone, and we hope this new development will attract industry.

Resident

- Attended Port Place display. When he questioned staff about Cable Bay, he believes staff indicated that the Draft Plan will go ahead as shown.
- The silent majority of the city don't want the project to go ahead.

Resident - Highview Terrace

- Brechin Church recently became a satellite food distribution centre so there would be a facility much closer to where its users live, and not just in the south end. The poor don't just live in the south end.
- Make services available throughout the whole city.
- Need a more heterogeneous community so there is no burden on just one neighbourhood.

Agent for property owner on Island Diesel Way (see presentation attached):

- Commended the committee and staff for work on the Plan; thinks it is a concise and understandable document.
- Is speaking in support of a designation change on Island Diesel Way and is requesting that it be changed from Industrial to Corridor.
- If the designation remains as proposed, it will result in a large warehouse with its back and parking along Bowen Road.
- Once the new OCP is adopted, Council would be looking for higher densities along corridors. However, existing zoning will not accommodate these densities. If the Zoning Bylaw is not married to the OCP, how will those wishing to develop proceed? Will interim measures be put in place?
- Higher densities along corridors will cause some concern, so when the new OCP is passed, it should send a clear message that that is the type of development we want and need.

Resident - Robart Street

- Think it's wonderful that food security is in the Plan.
- 60 years ago we were producing 40% of our food on Vancouver Island, now it's only 1%.
- There were 410 operators in 2001, with over 8000 hectares of land being used. Now we have only 3965 hectares and 295 farm operators.
- There is an opportunity to strengthen that part of the Plan making the food a short-term goal (currently designated as a medium-term goal).
- The food security plan is vague. There are good examples out there that could strengthen this section. Some are: density bonusing for community gardens; promoting green roofs; establishing targets for local food production; supporting the municipal purchase of farm land; and setting up a community trust for the benefit of the community.

Resident - Blueback Road

- Thinks this forum is more of a charade than anything else; the history of Nanaimo has been that what developers want, developers get.
- We are being told now that the PNAC vote on Cable Bay was 6 to 5 in favour.
- It was reported to Council that the Committee was in favour.

B. Holdom noted:

- Council was advised that the PNAC vote was 6 to 5 in favour.

Resident (cont.)

- Who is looking at the effect on water supply that the Cable Bay development will have?
- We must preserve our water supply or we will be in great difficulty.
- There are narrow roads in that area; the shoulders are breaking up badly. Who is looking at that? The taxpayer will get stuck with it.
- Who is thinking about the effect on the Downtown area?
- An immense amount of money has been poured into the Downtown Conference Centre; now there is a good chance that a 'resort' will be approved and drain everything from that.

Resident - Hammond Bay Road

- Bowen Road is a pleasure to drive down and provides a buffer zone to residential behind.
- It is a good area to increase density.
- Sees numerous improvements in the revised plan from the previous Plan Nanaimo.
- Have been talking about affordable housing for many years. Perhaps density bonusing could be used to achieve that.
- Development approvals should be providing us with affordable housing. The Committee could recommend that.
- A very limited tree bylaw was brought in and very old trees continue to be taken down - this has recently happened near my house.
- A property along Tiki Road was cleared 16 years ago and it still hasn't been developed.
- We need policies that would protect significant trees.
- Is concerned with the UCB; especially when starting to extend it outside of town. This will lead to more sprawl.
- Could be a really nice mission for the Committee to see these policies included.

Member of Nanaimo Foodshare Society

- It is a fact that global food systems are starting to fail.
- Live day-by-day depending on the food we eat.
- This is one of the reasons health is being destroyed in the wealthiest places in the world.
- Offered to enrich the food security portion of the new OCP as Nanaimo is big enough to adopt a food policy.
- Strategy should not be medium-term; we have to work fast.
- A good farmer growing food earns 80% of his income from people willing to pay premium costs for 20% of his product. He sells 80% of his product to wholesalers for 20% of his income. Need to include policies on farmer's markets.
- Would like to assist in developing a food charter for this community.

Bill Holdom:

- Would like to take this information to the RDN.

Resident (cont.)

- Will pass along this information to B. Holdom who requested to take it to the RDN Sustainability Committee.

Resident - Moyse Crescent

- Is concerned that the hospital area may become a dumping ground for what other areas don't want; services should be throughout Nanaimo.
- Suggest there be something in the Plan on height restrictions for urban nodes.
- For proposed urban nodes, the residents in those urban nodes should be addressed to get their feedback.
- What is a transit centre?

A. Tucker noted:

- A transit centre is an area where buses can come in and go out, as on Prideaux Street; not a bus garage servicing facility.
- There are currently no height restrictions on high-rises. Council considers each development on a case-by-case basis.

Resident - Moyse Crescent:

- Is concerned about growth of the city and the water supply that will be needed for the amount of growth you are anticipating.
- Where will the power come from? Suggest Council consider policies for wind power, etc.
- Be an environmentally friendly centre.

Resident - Sutton Street

- Thanked the Committee for all their hard work.
- Thinks some changes are quite good.
- Town Centres have disappeared; thinks they reflected more accurately Nanaimo's growth.
- Cities that are renowned have Town Centre type neighbourhoods; not big four-lane streets.
- Nodes with two-lane roads and parking lanes are the most successful.
- Draw circles around neighbourhoods and make sure services are in the area to support those neighbourhoods.
- Need more of a buffer between light industrial and residential.

Resident - Applecross Road

- Neighbourhoods give the feeling of belonging to a community and are more important with a growing population.
- Need to shift from single family to higher density with more infill in existing neighbourhoods, but be careful how we approach that.
- If we are increasing population in neighbourhoods, we need to provide services there so the residents don't have to drive so far; provide for vibrant neighbourhood centres.
- Public space is very important if there is going to be more density and infill. Need to hang on to what we have now, especially school lands and their public space. There is nothing protecting neighbourhoods and their schools in plan Nanaimo.
- Need stronger wording about keeping our schools.

Bill Holdom:

- Met with School District 68 to let them know about Council's concerns and the OCP.

Resident - McGirr Area

- Moved from Vancouver because of green space and sense of community.
- Since she has been here, green space has been disappearing with new development.
- Lives in the McGirr area and her children could be sent to schools 4 km away.

Bill Holdom noted:

- Many of these concerns are School District 68 issues and the City does not have much say over them.

Resident - Parkway Drive

- Need to preserve more public lands (eg. schools).
- Most neighbourhoods are built up around schools so they need to be protected. If School District 68 sells school land, it takes away the centre of our neighbourhood. It is the only large parcel of public land in our neighbourhood.
- The Plan talks about new schools, but we can't keep our existing schools.
- The City should be better advocates for our public lands, making it more difficult for the land to be sold off to developers.

Resident - Chestnut Street

- Preservation of existing parks is crucial; high-rises should never be built on park space. High-rises have a place in Nanaimo, but not on the waterfront or in parks.
- It is important that we preserve waterfront vistas and waterfront access for the public.
- Do not want to see high-rises between Stewart Avenue and the channel. Should stay at the current marine use.
- The waterfront is an amenity to the city, and a wonderful asset of the City.
- Would like to know what the plans are for Assembly Wharf lands. There should be more said in the Plan about its use and protection, and there should be considerable setback and public access there.
- Parks are mentioned but not specifically enough about where and when they will be acquired.
- Allow high-rise away from waterfront, not just limited to the nodes; put all along transit corridor (for example, along Old Island Highway where lots of transit is available).
- Is a member of the Community Gardens Society and is appreciative of the food security statement. However, it may be too general with not enough detail. Need to protect arable land and the farming function.
- Zoning should allow for the right to grow and sell produce in neighbourhoods.
- One resident leases three back yards and is successful in selling produce from these lots.
- Need to look at ways to address water use and gardening, perhaps make water less expensive for gardening. Food production should not be charged at the same rate as household use. Provide some sort of tax relief.
- Food security is a medium-term priority in the Plan. Propose that Food Link and partner agencies deliver the food security plan in detail in 18 months, not five years.
- The food security plan should be done in context of region and their sustainability process.

Resident - Schooner Way

- With regard to areas designated as park land, what is the ability of Council to overturn those parks for development?

Bill Holdom noted:

- The City is just in the process of developing a park zone, which is an additional layer of protection for park lands, but they could still be rezoned so is not an absolute guarantee. A covenant can be put on land, but is also subject to change.
- Pioneer Park is held by School District 68 as a future site for a school, so does not mean it will be kept permanently as park land.

Resident (cont.)

- Schools are the local park for many neighbourhoods in other areas of town, but the School District doesn't seem to value that. They also provide a community use.
- Regarding Goal 3 - Encourage Social Enrichment, neighbourhood schools function as the hub of the community for meetings, sports and safe places to play, and also for the cubs and scouts, etc.
- Integrate education and community needs. To lose them is taking a step back.

Bill Holdom noted:

- The most secure way to protect public land is to buy it, but that is also expensive.

Resident - Edgewood Area

- Some say this meeting is a waste of time, but there are suggestions from the workshops now included in the Plan.
- There is still an opportunity for clarification and simplification of the wording in the Plan.
- The wording in the sustainability goal suggests a poor conception of what that is, and then achieving it.
- Need to simplify to three kinds of behaviour: produce more; consume less; waste nothing. That is all that is required to become sustainable.
- Need to produce more food in urban areas and not just rural areas to improve our economy.
- Suggest looking for ways to clarify sustainability.
- Using the words 'Nodes' and 'Corridors' suggests a plan put together by a transportation engineer. Use the term 'community centres' instead. It is a term implying that a lot more interesting things can happen, not just a transportation node - a place to be and a worthwhile place to live.
- Change the perception around these areas; for example, Malaspina University-College should have a stronger link to Harewood so that the services that students and teachers require can be accommodated within walking distance; the same is true for residents.

R. Kelm, Malaspina University-College representative on PNAC, noted:

- Malaspina University-College is currently going through a similar planning process and will be holding public meetings.

Resident - Coachhouse Drive

- Adequate handicap access should be provided in any structures that are built.
- Encourage PNAC to consider making a suggestion about buildings that would accommodate residents with disabilities in the city. It is an aging population.
- Buses are not equipped adequately for the disabled.
- I would love to not drive anymore but that's the only way a disabled person can get anywhere.

Bill Holdom noted:

- There is a handi-dart bus in Nanaimo.

Resident (cont.)

- Is aware of the handi-dart but it "takes forever".
- Does not understand the City's policy on steep slopes. A slope near him has been deforested. Doesn't know how anything can be developed on it.
- Concrete blocks being placed on steep slopes are not going to hold back mudslides.

Bill Holdom noted:

- The City has steep slope provisions to address those concerns.

Resident - Coachhouse Drive

- Understands there have been promises of affordable housing, but not one building has been built.
- Would like to see targets for affordable housing in the Plan. Some cities have mechanisms to put in affordable housing – like Langford.
- To have healthy communities, we need mixtures of people in communities and housing for those people.
- Nanaimo needs to act on this and not just give lip service.

- Need to look at neighbourhoods – they are critical to the whole of Nanaimo. If we are starting to promote hubs of neighbourhoods, then we also need to consider all the amenities to make them livable (i.e. transportation). The present transit system does not encourage people to take the bus, and that factors into sustainability and air quality in our community.
- Is air quality mentioned in the plan anywhere?

Bill Holdom noted:

- Is addressed in the RDN Sustainability Plan.

Andrew Tucker noted:

- It is noted on Page 50 of the draft planNanaimo.

Resident (cont.)

- The Plan should explain why certain things have to be put into place - this would encourage more public participation.

Resident - View Street

- There are a lot of older wealthier people moving here who are retired. They need services, and the people who will be providing those services are not going to get paid well and be able to afford to buy \$400,000 homes.
- Ucluelet is asking developers to provide affordable housing.
- Does not think Nanaimo is sustainable right now.
- Involved with community gardens.
- The property behind Port Place Mall is already zoned for transportation. Jack Little had an excellent plan for that. Would like to see that as a transportation hub.
- The City should start thinking about making things less accessible for cars. If you don't have room on your property for your car, you shouldn't have one.

Resident - Smugglers Hill

- Would like to see an 'urban farm' designation created, with tax credits and concessions on water use. Victoria allows their residents to let other people use their yards to grow produce to sell.
- Would also like to see granny suites legalized (i.e. a designation for creative new space to increase densification and improve affordability).

Bill Holdom noted:

- Council has directed staff to look into the granny flat issue, and a report on this issue will be considered by Council on 2008-APR-14.

Resident - Williamson Road

- The Plan does not include a definition of 'sustainability'. Do you have some common idea of what that word means to you?
- We all agree that our earth is a finite resource. If we continue this rate of consumption, we would need 4½ earths to sustain us. Given our present level of consumption, Nanaimo is not sustainable.
- Would like to see a general statement of principle in the Plan supporting your idea of what sustainability is.
- "Prosperity" and "quality of life" are lovely statements. Our town's society is being reduced, not enhanced.
- Developers coming into this area just strip the land. They don't even put in additional trees as window dressing.

- Thinks City Hall has a credibility challenge. It is not believable that the proposed Cable Bay development isn't a done deal.
- Public perception is that developers run the show.
- Developers asked for 25% reduction in development fees at Council meeting and they got it.
- How can we let people move from elsewhere, and then we pay to provide all of the services for them, for example, Cable Bay?
- Would like to see some general principles about global issues we are facing.
- Sustainable growth is an oxymoron.
- Is the population increasing by 50% in the next 25 years sustainable?
- Would like to know what the actual population numbers are that are expected – what are the upper limits on it?

Resident

- Think this public meeting was not advertised in the best way.
- This a very complex and very important document. This is a critical point in where Nanaimo will go with its growth.
- Give citizens more time to discuss this document and how it will affect their lives and their communities.
- Maybe people don't take an interest because it takes a lot of time to understand the document.
- There is lack of focus on neighbourhoods and community centres in the Plan.
- There is lack of a plan for cycling and discouraging driving.
- Create infrastructure that will make it easier for people to cycle.
- Health centres need to be created in each community; important to designate land for that.
- Densification requires people know each other and share space, (ie. community gardens).

Resident - Starling Place

- Environment, economic and social all need to be considered. Don't ignore one at the expense of another.
- Concerned with expansion of UCB. UCBs are a fundamental thing in planning documents.
- The proposed Cable Bay development is not sustainable at all. It's a golf course and houses for wealthy people.
- Need to reduce consumption and increase local production of food.
- The definition of sustainability is not being followed in Nanaimo.
- The phrase 'environmental footprint' is not even mentioned in the document.
- Likes the idea of urban nodes, but there are too many mentioned in the document.
- Fewer corridors would be better, and they need to have mixed uses.
- Don't agree with the economic goal. The OCP is a land use document. The social goal is too ambiguous and jumps around between too many components. It should focus more on affordable housing.
- Needs to be ways to measure whether any of the goals are being achieved - indicators.
- Sustainability impossible without infill and densification. UCB expansion makes this impossible.
- Need more pedestrian and bike lanes with improved sidewalks.
- Maybe we should be "less unsustainable". Not as nice sounding, but more accurate.
- Need to improve transit efficiency, and have less focus on maintaining roads.
- Unsure of what data was used to determine what area designations should be changed. Were those decisions semi-arbitrary?