

Coast Community Builders Association

TAKE A STAND: 2009- 2010 PRIORITY POLICIES

Introduction

The Board of Directors drafted and CCBA members adopted a Mission Statement for the fiscal year 2009-2010 – TAKE A STAND. To support the Mission, Goal #1 for the year was to ensure CCBA represented value to members by having a voice and some influence in the community. To achieve this, CCBA determined to raise its profile and its level of participation in civic matters and public dialogue.

5 Key Initiatives for 2009-2010

Five areas were selected to focus on in order to reach a high profile with all business and government people on the Sunshine Coast:

Marine Access – Memorandum of Understanding with Sechelt Indian Band

Housing - Secondary Suites and other low-impact sustainable development approaches

Taxation – Development Cost Charges

Infrastructure – Sewage Treatment

Municipal Policy – Marine and Industrial Zoning

1. Mid-Coast Marine Access

Background – In the early 1990's, in an effort to create economic opportunities and revitalize downtown Sechelt, the District of Sechelt, Sechelt Indian Band, Rotary Club of the Sunshine Coast-Sechelt, and the Community Futures Development Corporation formed the Sechelt Economic Development Partnership. Among the promising initiatives identified by the group was the development of a full service marina at the Band's Selma Park location. A preliminary engineering report was prepared in 1995 which outlined the potential and possibilities. Recognizing the importance of a marine facility to the economic development and sustainability of Sechelt and the surrounding area, and the potential of its beneficial contribution to the construction industry, the CCBA began to develop a planning relationship with the Band to promote the project, and unsuccessfully applied for federal funding under the Community Adjustment program in June 2009. A formal relationship to work together to promote the project was cemented April 30 2010 under a 3 year Memorandum of Association between the Band and CCBA. The Selma Park Breakwater Marina Steering Committee was formed in July 2010 to focus the SIB and CCBA's energies on the project.

The Challenge – The CCBA and SIB have no committed resources to support project planning. The scope of the project is significant, as is the total projected capital cost. This suggests an incremental approach to development may be required, which will necessitate a prolonged phase of project planning and management. As well, the data that described and justified the project dates from 1995 and requires review and updating.

CCBA recommends – That the balance of funding held by the Sechelt Economic Development Partnership for marine access be made available to support the Selma Park Breakwater Marina Steering Committee, and that the District of Sechelt play a prominent role in promoting the proposed project and support efforts to secure sufficient resources.

2. Housing – Secondary suites, secondary dwellings/cottages/laneway housing

Background – Secondary suites in existing single family dwellings and additional dwellings on the same site, such as laneway housing, “granny” cottages and coach houses, are desirable housing forms that provide both expanded housing options and affordability. They are a neighbourhood-friendly form of increasing density, maintaining the streetscape, and providing much needed rental housing or an option for aging parents or grown children to downsize and stay in their same neighbourhood. Suites and garden homes are environmentally friendly, minimize the disturbance associated with new multi-family development, and avoid the expensive expansion of infrastructure required by a new subdivision. Affordability measures in the Official Community Plan include the promotion of these alternate housing forms, and these relatively small scale works, whether new builds or renovations, are particularly well suited to sustain the expert workforce, suppliers and manufacturers on the Coast.

The Challenge – Zoning restrictions and homeowners’ limited access to capital are both barriers to expanding the number of secondary suites and cottages. The existing stock of secondary suites is thought to present its own challenges, in so far as a significant number may not comply with current zoning, building codes or regulations. New secondary dwellings are restricted in many residential areas, and where they are permitted there’s a significant development cost to the homeowner.

Senior government resources are limited. The federal government’s economic stimulation plan that responded to the 2008 recession by providing a tax rebate for completed home renovations and improvements has ended, though the economy hasn’t yet rebounded and people’s savings have been eroded. CMHC’s secondary/garden suite RRAP program presents some opportunity for financial assistance, but is restricted to limited-income seniors and people with disabilities. There is no provincial housing program targeted to secondary suites.

CCBA recommends – Local governments need to take measures to stimulate and enable the development of secondary and garden suites and make their creation or improvement more affordable for homeowners. They should identify, expand and promote permissible zoning areas and assist with affordability by providing financial incentives including waived inspection fees, development permit application and business license fees, reduced add’l property taxes and development cost charges, fast-tracked Building Permit reviews and approvals, and flexibility on parking requirements in exchange for owners providing additional housing options.

3. Taxation – Development Cost Charges

Background – Development cost charges are the expenses for roads, parks, sewer and water infrastructure a municipality may recover from a developer as part of the costs that new developments create. DCCs are collected upfront from the developer, and the related work may proceed concurrently with the development, or at some time in the future. Local governments have been increasing the development permit application fees and the categories and rates of DCCs for some years. The escalating expense of DCCs and lack of consistency between jurisdictions can create barriers to the development of new and innovative housing projects and increases the cost of new housing for the consumer. Lack of housing options and upward pressures on housing affordability on the Sunshine Coast erode efforts to attract and retain young families and emerging businesses and have a negative effect on the economic development and sustainability of our communities.

The Challenge - With escalating real estate prices, a disproportionately large aged population in comparison to other towns and cities in BC, disproportionate reliance on a residential tax base in comparison to commercial or industrial uses, falling school enrollment resulting in school closures and workforce adjustments, and few economic opportunities, measures need to be taken to generate more affordable housing to attract and retain the productive 25-45 year age group.

CCBA recommends - a harmonization of DCCS across the three local jurisdictions, a simplification of the development permit application process, and consideration of amendments to DCCS including reduction to application fees and DCC rates and charges, and waiving or postponement of payment in exchange for demonstrable consumer benefit such as affordability or environmentally sustainable building practices.

4. Infrastructure – Sewage Treatment

Background - Presently, Sechelt has two sewage treatment plants, at Ebbitide St and Dusty Rd. The Ebbitide plant consists of primary and secondary treatment, but does not have adequate sludge digesting capacity. This plant routinely operates at its design limit, and excess sewage is pumped to the Dusty Rd plant for treatment. Secondary sludge (actually 99% water) is also pumped up to the Dusty Rd plant for treatment. The Dusty Rd plant, on land leased from Construction Aggregates Limited (CAL) receives the excess raw sewage, and secondary sludge, from Ebbitide, and also all septic haulage. Final treated effluent from both plants is discharged into Trail Bay, via a pipeline and ocean outfall. Because of the high biological loading from all the sludge and septage, the Dusty Rd plant is at its biological load limit. So between the two plants, there is very little spare capacity, and expansions are needed. The Sechelt Sewage Facilities Commission has been working with consultants Urban Systems on assessing the options and alternatives. The District of Sechelt has purchased the Anderchek property on Allen road, laid aside funds in its capital plan and secured a federal grant that is available until 2013, and is facing time constraints to make a decision to proceed. With the cooperation

of the District of Sechelt, residents that would be impacted by the new sludge treatment plant being proposed have been working to suggest alternative locations and technologies. Their efforts resulted in attracting Leducor, an early 2010 trial in Sechelt of its newly developed electro-coagulation system, and a proposal to create a demonstration project at Sechelt.

The Challenge – The proposed sludge treatment plant expansion is a temporary measure- the sewage system will need additional work within a decade. Its planned to be located in an established residential area that is surrounded by prime location for future residential development, and the technologies being considered can be foul smelling, require a large area for operations and buffer, and do nothing to address harmful pollutants such as pharmaceuticals, heavy metals, pesticides and fertilizers. Measures must be taken to address the present and future needs of the community.

CCBA recommends - that the Sechelt Sewage Facilities Commission give timely attention and serious consideration to Leducor’s proposal, by becoming directly involved in discussions in addition to making information requests through Urban Systems. The federal contribution should be secured through early expenditure, or if necessary negotiations should be entered to request an extension to the spending deadline.

5. Municipal Policy- Marine Industry

Background – The District of Sechelt has been facing pressure from neighbourhoods located adjacent to industrially zoned lands, with specific opposition to expansion of Target Marine’s sturgeon fish plant and operations at Mountain Marine Transportation. Sechelt already lacks a sufficient industrially-zoned land base to maintain a sustainable economy. Well designed communities normally aim for a mix of 60% residential, and 40% commercial and industrial lands to achieve a balance between jobs and housing, and to produce the critically important tax base needed to provide adequate services and the cultural, educational, and recreational amenities expected by residents. Sechelt finds itself with an imbalance, with close to 90% residential lands. Commercial and industrial land have a higher mill rate than residential property, and the businesses established there generate the jobs that fuel the local economy. It is essential that commercial and industrial land uses are conserved, expanded and protected into the future through zoning regulations.

The Challenge - To support local marine access and industry, avoid undue tax burden on residents, and provide much needed employment opportunities, Sechelt needs to secure existing marine industrial lands and do more to attract and maintain marine industrial and commercial interests.

CCBA recommends – That the District of Sechelt affirm the current zoning that allows fish processing as well as cultivation at Target Marine’s Grey Creek Hatchery, and amend zoning to secure heavy marine industry on Kontiki Rd. That the District actively promote its existing commercially- and industrially-zoned lands, consider incentive to

attract potential investors, and support the efforts of community organizations committed to attracting investment and job development.