



What We Heard – Summary of Open House for Bell McKinnon Neighbourhood Plan

Summary Completed April 8, 2016

Background

North Cowichan's 2011 Official Community Plan places the Bell McKinnon area within the Municipality's Urban Containment Boundary, designating it as an area for future urban growth. North Cowichan is developing a Bell McKinnon Neighbourhood Plan to set a high-level direction for appropriate land uses within the Bell McKinnon area over the next number of decades. The purpose of the Plan is to ensure that future growth occurs in a thoughtful, consistent, and coordinated way.

Summary of What We Heard

On March 31, 2016, North Cowichan hosted an open house to talk with the community about the Neighbourhood Planning process and preliminary concept plans for growth. The focus of this meeting was to provide information and to ask the community about its priorities and ideas about growth.

The open house was promoted through newspaper ads, social media, North Cowichan's website, the radio, and letters mailed directly to landowners within and directly adjacent to the Bell McKinnon Neighbourhood Plan area.

The Municipality was pleased that approximately 100 people attended the open house! Attendees were presented with [three concept plans](#), representing different levels of potential growth in the Bell McKinnon area over the next 20 years (low, medium, and mixed-use/urban densities). Attendees were asked to place a sticky-dot on the concept that they preferred. Of the 100 people who attended the meeting, 53 participated in the sticky-dot exercise, with the following results:

- 9 people supported Concept A (low density)
- 6 people supported Concept B (medium density)
- 38 people supported Concept C (mixed-use/urban density)

This exercise demonstrated broad support for the mixed-use/urban density model of growth.

Attendees were also asked to use flip charts to record their comments about growth, priorities, special neighbourhood characteristics, and the rezoning application for the proposed new hospital

site. The comments provided on these topics can be summarized as:

- A desire for road enhancements, speed controls, and the creation of cycling and pedestrian paths.
- A desire for strategic growth (i.e. focused pockets of growth rather than urban sprawl).
- A desire to preserve the rural, farm environment.
- A desire to understand how and why the proposed site for the new hospital was selected (*note: site selection was conducted by the Cowichan Valley Regional Hospital District*).
- A desire to extend transit services to the neighbourhood.
- A desire for future development to bear the cost of extending Municipal services to the neighbourhood.

In addition to the feedback received at the open house, North Cowichan has received input from a number of Bell McKinnon residents who have emailed comments in through bellmckinnon@northcowichan.ca. The feedback received by email can be summarized as:

- Concerns regarding traffic speeds currently occurring in the Bell McKinnon area (specifically on Norcross, Sprott, and Bell McKinnon Roads), and a desire for enhanced road safety.
- A desire for Municipal sewer services to be extended into the neighbourhood as soon as possible.
- A desire for growth in the area to include "lifestyle" characteristics, like cycling/pedestrian paths, green spaces, affordable living options, and mixed commercial-residential designs.
- A desire for transparency in the Neighbourhood Planning process and the re-zoning application for the potential new hospital site.
- A desire for good communication between North Cowichan and residents through the Neighbourhood Planning process.

A Note on Municipal Sanitary Services

At both the open house and through email feedback, the topic of extending Municipal sanitary (sewer) services into the Bell McKinnon area was a major theme.

Under Section 212 of the [Community Charter](#) and for areas within the Urban Containment Boundary (as Bell McKinnon is), a "person" (a property owner or a group of property owners) can petition the Municipality of North Cowichan to have a Local Area Service (LAS) to provide sewer services to their properties. The "person" or group must define the estimated costs and the properties that they want connected to the LAS and they must get the approval of 50% of the parcels and 50% of the assessed value of the properties in the LAS. Once they obtain sufficient consent of the property owners, the petition can be considered for approval by Council. Typically when these are approved by Council, the property owners in the Local Area Service pay 90% of the costs and the Municipality contributes 10% from the Local Area Service Reserve (which is not funded by property taxes).

In summary, sewer services are delivered under a user-pay system and are not subsidized or paid for through property taxes.

In the case of the Bell McKinnon neighbourhood area, it is possible that some of the new

development that is being considered, including the proposed new hospital, will pay for the costs of extending sanitary services to its property. However, it should be noted that developers would not be expected to pay for extending the service to residential properties in the surrounding area.

What's Next?

North Cowichan staff will now proceed to develop a draft Neighbourhood Plan that reflects the public input received to date. When the draft Plan is prepared, North Cowichan will seek public input on the draft Plan itself (likely in May 2016). A notice will be sent out through this email distribution list when the draft Plan is available for comment.

More Information

All of the materials presented at the open house meeting have been posted to North Cowichan's website at www.northcowichan.ca/bellmckinnon. We encourage you to check this page often for updates.

You can email comments or questions on the Neighbourhood Plan and process to: bellmckinnon@northcowichan.ca

