

## COMMENTS ON THE WEST SIDNEY LOCAL AREA PLAN

The West Sidney Local Area Plan is a long overdue and very exciting new vision for West Sidney. As the representative of the Sidney Community Association on the stakeholder consultative group, I commend the project team of Barefoot Planning and Town staff for the comprehensiveness of the Plan, balancing the needs of industry with those of future residents. The 6 Key Changes on page 4 make sense and the short, medium and long term actions for implementation on page 79 provide a practical guide. The report is extensive. The research and attention given to transportation is very welcome. Where I have not commented, I generally agree with the vision and recommendations.

As a representative of the Sidney Community Association, my comments focus on the recommendations for the Mixed Use Village, but it must be recognized that many proposed changes in the industrial area will also benefit residents, eg. improved pedestrian safety, greenways, people spaces, improved multimodal pathways, transit improvements, stormwater management, and the proposed truck routes bylaw. These are my own views, with input from some Community Association Board members, not meant to represent West Sidney residents or all members of the Community Association.

I believe that most Sidney residents would strongly support changing the Official Community Plan designation of the current residential area from Industrial to Residential.

### MIXED USE VILLAGE

#### 1) ROLE OF CURRENT RESIDENTS

The West Sidney residents I have spoken with approached this WSLAP process with pleasure that their neighbourhood was finally getting some attention from the Town. They wanted a sidewalk and better pedestrian safety on Galaran, plus some beautification at the standard of the rest of the Town. They value many aspects of their present neighbourhood and did not ask for or expect the level of densification proposed. West Sidney residents are best able to speak for themselves, but **it is very important that they be listened to and have an ongoing role regarding the changes in their neighbourhood regarding the Master Plan and future redevelopment.** We don't know how quickly redevelopment will start or what its pace will be over the next 20 years, but pro-active, accurate information that anticipates residents' concerns will reduce misunderstandings. The Town should work to create an open, positive relationship with residents to provide quick responses to questions like those that arose at the last Open House. In that case, the project team could clarify that nothing in the plan will remove property owners' complete control over whether their property will be developed, but it is important to recognize that anxiety about a proposal for a complete redevelopment of one's neighbourhood will inevitably cause many questions and concerns even if it is expected to take 20 years.

#### 2) TENANTS

How many West Sidney residents are tenants? Property owners are in control and will benefit financially from rezoning, but tenants are in a different position if rezoning leads to the loss of existing affordable rental units. Sidney and the region currently lack workforce attainable and affordable housing so that **displaced tenants who wish to remain in the area will probably be unable to do so unless the Town takes a new approach.**

### 3) IMMEDIATE NEEDS

**Upgrades to Galaran Road to address pedestrian safety and attractiveness, things as simple as getting Canada Post to move the mailboxes to a lighted area on the east side of the road and passing a Truck Route bylaw are urgent priorities.**

### 4) CAREFUL, CONSISTENT PLANNING DECISIONS

“To realize the Mixed Use Village, staff and, in particular, Council need to follow through on their support of this LAP by also supporting future development that works toward the long term vision... the Town cannot simply approve zoning amendments. Successful redevelopment of this area requires a balance of quality built, social and environmental infrastructure. ...in addition to developing related policies (eg. amenity policies)...it is recommended that the Town develop a detailed ‘Master Plan’ ...to guide a) the creation of new spaces and places and b) the establishment of a unique sense of place for the area.”<sup>i</sup> These words on page 79 on the Plan bear repeating. **The plan requires a commitment from current and future Councils, with the support of staff, to be consistent in making decisions according to the vision and plan.**

### 5) WORKFORCE HOUSING - ATTAINABLE

The commitment to developing attainable workforce housing with ancillary services like a cafe, small grocery and childcare is one of the most attractive aspects of the Village concept. The October 2014 Saanich Peninsula Housing Options Report<sup>ii</sup> Sidney North Saanich Workforce Housing Survey found that 67% of respondents were commuting to work from outside the three Saanich Peninsula municipalities and there was strong demand for a range of rental and ownership housing, Potential purchasers could afford \$250,000 to \$500,000 for a home (condo, townhome or single family) and 65% of renters could afford up to \$1200 per month. Employee incomes have probably increased somewhat since 2014, but are unlikely to match increases in the cost of homes. **Sidney should not proceed with rezoning until there is a workable strategy to deliver workforce housing.** A recent [Vancouver Sun article](#)<sup>iii</sup> highlights the challenges of getting it right and some opportunities to be more effective.

### 6) IMPORTANCE OF THE VILLAGE MASTER PLAN

**Rezoning should not precede the development of the Master Plan and associated policies.** The general location of green space, a community meeting place, pedestrian pathways and a possible parking garage should be decided before redevelopment begins. Involving current residents in creating the Master Plan is important. It will be stressful living in a neighbourhood if it is changing dramatically. The more residents are engaged in shaping the neighbourhood, the more they may be able to accept construction disruption and loss of green space (lawns) in favour of more shared, public green space. **For the Town, it will be important to monitor the first few developments and respond to any unintended effects.**

### 7) BUILDING HEIGHT

Looking from the corner of Beacon and the Pat Bay Highway, a series of 6 storey buildings along the North West side of the highway, seems definitely out of character and inappropriate for the surroundings. Current residents have expressed very realistic concerns about the increased traffic from large multi-family buildings going up on their existing residential streets. None of the buildings in the photographs contained in the WSLAP report are 5 or 6 storeys and current industrial buildings are not this high. On the east side of the highway, buildings are a maximum of 3 storeys with setbacks and trees

between them and the highway. **A 4 storey maximum makes much more sense, at least for the first few years under the Local Area Plan.**

#### **8) GREEN BUILDING REQUIREMENTS**

The plan recommends that new buildings over 4 storeys must meet minimum green building requirements established by the Town. **In 2017, it is more desirable for many reasons to strongly encourage ALL new buildings of any height in the area to meet green building requirements.**

#### **9) PARKING EXEMPTION FROM MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS – PAYING FOR OFF-STREET PARKING**

The Plan recommends exempting all new development from minimum off-street parking requirements and instead requiring a transportation demand management study as part of each development application process to determine the appropriate amount of vehicular and bicycle parking needed. It also envisages property owners charging for parking, which was not allowed under Bylaw 1661. **Removing minimum off-street parking requirements and requiring the user to pay extra for a parking space seem feasible in new developments where this is understood by prospective owners and tenants and has a strong potential to reduce the cost of dwelling units. The concept of a transportation demand management study for each development merits further study to identify appropriate methodology and standards.**

#### **10) MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORTATION LINKS TO EAST SIDNEY**

**The improvements to the pathway along highway 17 and new pedestrian overpass north of Beacon need to be planned with input from residents to accommodate pedestrians, bicycles and scooters, and to recognize the way people actually move.**

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<sup>i</sup> West Sidney Local Area Plan Draft, p 79

<sup>ii</sup> Saanich Peninsula Housing Options, Tim Wake, Affordable Housing Consultant 2 October 2014

<sup>iii</sup> Vancouver Sun August 5, 2017. Density Bonuses provide unintended consequences. Elizabeth Murphy