



Official Community Plan for the Electoral Areas Bylaw No. 4373
Schedule B – Local Area Plans
Step 1 Visioning
Report on Engagement & Communication

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Executive Summary

Local area plans are being developed as Schedule B to the Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD) Bylaw No. 4373 – Official Community Plan for the Electoral Areas (OCP). Community engagement is essential to developing local area plans that reflect communities' vision for the future.

During Fall 2023, electoral area communities were invited to participate in Step 1 Visioning for the local area plans. A series of facilitated workshops, supported by an online survey, provided valuable, community-based input. The selected engagement activities and communication methods used to promote the activities were based on experience and evaluation of past OCP engagement events, plus the specific intent of Step 1 Visioning.

Valuable input was gathered from respective communities—Step 1 Visioning engagement was a success. However, participation at in-person engagement events was lower than at past OCP events. Due to the technical nature of Step 2 Planning and Step 3 Implementation, engagement and consultation is proposed to take place with the electoral area Advisory Planning Commissions (APC).

1.0 Introduction

The CVRD is modernizing Bylaw No. 4373 – Official Community Plan for the Electoral Areas (OCP), which sets out a vision for the electoral areas over the next 20 years. While most of the OCP schedules apply to all electoral areas, nine local area plans (located in Schedule B) are being developed for identified growth areas that generally align with the growth containment boundaries of OCP Bylaw No. 4373.

1.1 Purpose

This report provides an overview and evaluation of the Step 1 Visioning engagement and communication which was held during the Fall 2023.

1.2 The Local Area Plans

Local area plans are planning documents that build upon the vision, objectives and policies in the OCP. They provide greater detail on growth management for communities and area-specific objectives and policies to address daily needs, infrastructure, transportation and housing. There are nine local area plans in development in the electoral areas, that are generally aligned with growth containment boundaries. See Figure 1 – Local Area Plans from Harmonization to Modernization.

Figure 1 Local Area Plans from Harmonization to Modernization



1.3 Local Area Plan Development Process

The local area plans are being developed in three steps:

- Step 1 – Visioning
- Step 2 – Planning
- Step 3 – Implementation

Further information on the local area plan development steps can be found at planyourcowichan.ca.

1.4 How to Read this Report

The report is organized in two sections:

- Section 2.0 Engagement Activities and Summary of Results

Provides an overview and analysis of the engagement activities offered in the Fall 2023.

- Section 3.0 Communication Activities & Summary of Results

Provides an overview and analysis of the communication strategy to promote opportunities to participate in the engagement.

Support materials are found in three appendices:

- Appendix A – Summary of Feedback by Local Area Plan
- Appendix B – Local Area Visions & Revised Descriptions
- Appendix C – Engagement Background & Evaluation
 - OCP engagement overview 2021–2023
 - Detailed engagement & communication evaluation
 - Communication details
 - Survey sample

The report now begins with Section 2.0 Engagement Activities and Summary of Results.

2.0 Engagement Activities and Summary of Results

2.1 Engagement Purpose & Overview

The purpose of the Step 1 Visioning community engagement was to present and gather feedback on draft:

- local area visions
- local area descriptions
- Complete Communities¹ initial assessments, which include housing, daily needs, infrastructure and transportation.

Feedback from the community was gathered in two ways: in-person facilitated workshops (qualitative data) and surveys (quantitative and qualitative data). Handouts and surveys followed the workshop presentations. The following subsections describe these activities in further detail.

2.2 Engagement Activities

2.2.1 Facilitated Workshops

Residents were invited to participate in and provide feedback through a series of in-person facilitated workshops. Wall-mounted posters provided local area plan maps, local area plan

¹ The CVRD received a grant from the Union of BC Municipalities to support Complete Communities assessments that align with development of the local area plans. Learn more at ubcm.ca/lgps/complete-communities

development timeline and special study areas maps. The Ideas Book, which is a living record of on-going community feedback and implementation, was available for viewing and signature. Coffee, cookies and kids' activities were available.

The workshops began with a presentation to introduce the local area plan development process and objectives followed by a facilitated discussion and interactive digital polls. Handouts developed for each local plan area were provided to mirror the facilitated discussion. The handouts provided the QR code link to the online survey. Community-generated insights and ideas were captured live on digital displays.

Facilitated workshops took place October to November 2023, at 8 different venues covering 11 local area plans. It became apparent after the planning process that 2 local area plans did not meet the purpose of a local area plan (see section 2.3.1 of this report for explanation). See Table 2.1 Facilitated Workshop Schedule 2023.

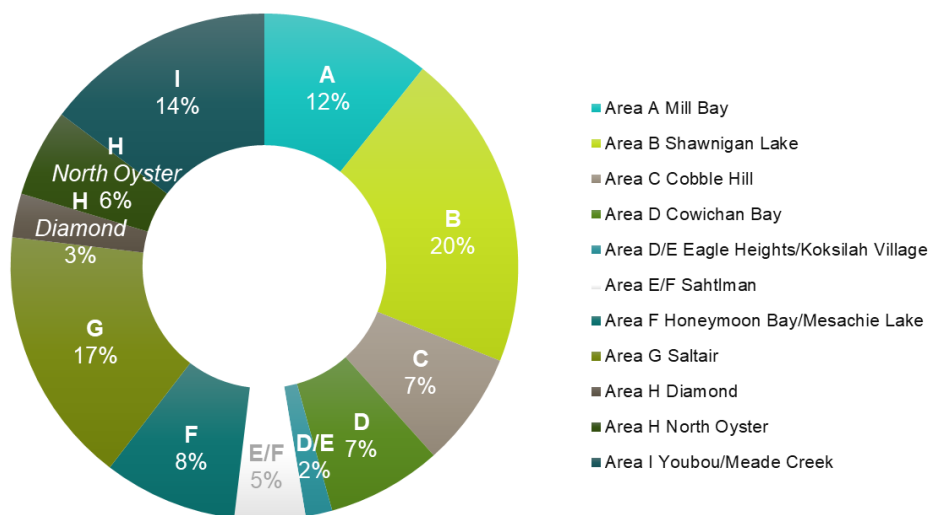
Table 2-1 Facilitated Workshop Schedule 2023

Electoral Area/Local Area Plan	Venue	Date	Number of Workshops	Participants
A – Mill Bay B – Shawnigan Lake C – Cobble Hill	Shawnigan Lake Recreation Centre	October 13/14	4	100
D/E – Eagle Heights/ Koksilah Village	Eagles Hall	October 25	2	25
D – Cowichan Bay	Oceanfront Suites	October 26	2	100
E/F – Sahtlam	Sahtlam Fire Hall	October 27	2	20
F – Honeymoon Bay/Mesachie	Honeymoon Bay Community Hall	October 28	2	25
I – Youbou/Meade Creek	Cowichan Lake Recreation	October 29	2	45
G – Saltair	Saltair Community Centre	November 4	2	65
H – North Oyster & Diamond	North Oyster Community Hall	November 5	2	40
Total			18	400

2.2.2 Survey

An online survey provided the opportunity for communities to share detailed feedback on content that mirrored the workshops and handouts. The survey was available online through planyourcowichan.ca and in hard copy by request. It was available for those unable to attend in person, as well as to complement the in-person facilitated workshops. A sample survey is provided in Appendix C.

Figure 2 Percent Participation by Number of Surveys Completed



2.3 Summary of Results

In total, 200 surveys were submitted and 400 people participated in the 18 facilitated workshops.

The combined feedback has resulted in stronger local area plan visions that reflect the unique communities. Area descriptions have been refined to reflect the character and special places found within the local area plans. Community feedback has partially informed the development of scenarios, which is part of the engagement on Step 2 with the APCs in Spring 2024.

Community contributions are captured in detail in Appendix A Summary of Feedback by Local Area Plan, as well as in the updated Ideas Book posted on planyourcowichan.ca. The Ideas Book is a critical piece of the community engagement because it reports back to the community on how their ideas are reflected in the OCP and LAP policies and objectives.

2.3.1 Local Area Plans - 11 to 9

Initially, eleven communities were identified for local area plans. After engagement, it was clear that local area plans are not the appropriate planning tool for all eleven. Sahtlam and North Oyster are characterized by agricultural and forestry lands with no designated areas for growth (with the exception of Paldi in electoral area F). The North Oyster local area plan was partially replaced with the Woodley Range special study area². In Sahtlam, the LAP was reduced to the community of Paldi, and included in the Area F local area plan of Honeymoon Bay/Mesachie Lake.

Schedule A of the OCP provides policies on matters of great importance to Sahtlam and North Oyster communities, including specific policies on the protection of water resources and watersheds, ecosystem biodiversity and agricultural lands.

² For information on Special Study Areas in the draft OCP Bylaw 4373 see <https://www.planyourcowichan.ca/24801/widgets/153399/documents/125386>

2.4 Analysis

2.4.1 Choice of Engagement – Facilitated Workshops

Various engagement methods have been used throughout the OCP engagement process, including open houses, Ideas Fairs, facilitated presentations and community circles (used during public health restrictions), and they were all met with a good reception from the public and appropriate for the particular stage of OCP development.

Facilitated workshops were selected for the local area plans Step 1 to provide in-depth analysis and facilitated group conversation, while the survey provided an alternative for those who could not attend. Online polling using smartphones (or raised hands) allowed live interaction and participation, as well as a bit of fun. Live note taking displayed on screen demonstrated that community voices were being heard and documented.

The facilitated workshops had scheduled start times, with two options offered at each event to maximize opportunity to participate. In some circumstances, participants arrived midway through a workshop, anticipating a drop-in style open house. Where people were unable to stay for the duration of a facilitated workshop, the handout provided the workshop content and link to the online survey to ensure feedback was still collected. While appropriate for this stage of OCP development, we would not hold duplicate workshops in the future.

With a total of 400 participants, overall attendance was lower than at previous open houses (the February 2023 Ideas Fairs had 800 in person participants). This may be attributed to a combination of factors, possibly including engagement fatigue. A power outage from inclement weather could have been a factor in low attendance for the Eagle Heights/Koksilah Village facilitated workshops. More than 200 people opted to complete the survey, which may have reduced the number of in-person participants, but still provided valuable feedback.

3.0 Communication Activities & Summary of Results

The communications campaign for Step 1 events launched in late September 2023. An Advisory Planning Commission (APC) meeting was held online to ensure APC members were aware of upcoming engagement opportunities, as these volunteers are integral links between the CVRD and the communities.

A combination of print ads, radio ads, postcards, social media, posters and direct emails have been used in the past to generate OCP engagement. During past engagement, participants have stated that the most effective communication was direct emails (through Directors or the planyourcowichan.ca distribution list) and social media. Emphasis was placed on these communications methods for the Fall 2023 campaign. Postcards were not used in Area G and H, although postcards have been identified in the past as a key communication tool.

3.1 Communication Activities

The Step 1 Visioning engagement opportunities were promoted through print and social media advertisements, the planyourcowichan.ca website and direct email communication and posters.

Further details on the communications campaign, including sample materials and statistics, is provided in Appendix C to this report.

3.2 Summary of Results

The Step 1 communications campaign was similar to past campaigns for OCP engagement events, with some notable differences: ads were placed in new print publications in the South Cowichan and there was an overall reduction in the number of print ads (8 print ads) compared to the 2022/2023 Ideas Fairs (19 print ads). Print advertisements are expensive relative to other forms of communication, and it is difficult to determine how broadly they reach community members to justify the expense.

The engagement rate on reels featuring area directors (39% for Instagram) was extremely high, indicating a high level of success. The time spent creating the video reels is worthwhile due to the significantly higher uptake of reels versus static posts (which perform moderately well). Reels are relatively inexpensive to make, are lively and engaging, and can be cross-posted on various social media platforms.

[Planyourcowichan.ca](https://planyourcowichan.ca) remains a valuable platform for hosting material and welcoming feedback. The growing distribution list (increase of 183 to 717 email addresses registered since the February 2023 Ideas Fairs) is encouraging for maintaining communication with interested members of the public for the OCP project.

3.3 Analysis

From past events, insight has been gained to the most effective communication tools – direct emails and social media. Instagram reels of area directors welcoming the community to the respective events were extremely engaging and well received.

Postcards were not used for this communications campaign. In past campaigns, postcards were sent to all electoral area residents, with mixed success. Delivery by Canada Post in rural areas is challenging for various reasons. However, those who successfully receive postcards appreciate the individualized notice, and many voiced disappointment (particularly in areas G and H) that postcards were not used in this campaign.

Familiar communications challenges persisted, including misunderstanding with respect to communicating the CVRD's jurisdiction and authority versus the Province's, and role of an official community plan (policy) versus zoning bylaw (regulation).

Table 3.1 provides a summary of successes and challenges for Step 1 Visioning Engagement & Communication.

Table 3-1 Step 1 Visioning Engagement & Communication Summary Successes and Challenges

Strategy	Successes	Challenges
Engagement – Facilitated Workshops	In-depth discussion Live polling & note taking Handouts provided material to takeaway	Participation was lower than at past events – potentially engagement fatigue.
Engagement – Online Survey	200 surveys completed Quantitative data Expanded outreach	The online survey was problematic for some domains, notably shaw. Numbered hard copies were provided by request.
Communication – Social Media	Reels engagement rate – 39%	Not able to determine whether engagement rate translates to participation, however reels do increase awareness of OCP.
Communication – Planyourcowichan.ca	Distribution list expanded by 183 names to 717 since last engagement Feb 2023.	As an online platform, it is limited to people with resources and ability to access.
Communication – Print Ads	New publications in circulation were used in the South Cowichan.	Reduced overall print ads may have been a factor in lower attendance, however we've learned through past engagement that print ads are not the most effective communication tool.