



Campbell River Sustainable Official Community Plan (SOCP) Campbell River District Chamber of Commerce (CRDCC) Response

This document is being provided to the City of Campbell River to summarize the CRDCC's response and recommendations to the SOCP based on feedback from our consultative process with Chamber board, staff and members.

The CRDCC has been pleased to provide ongoing support to the SOCP through our direct representation of the CRDCC on the SOCP steering/advisory committee. The CRDCC also provided representatives on parallel planning initiatives, in particular, the Community Energy & Emissions Plan. Our participation also included SOCP town hall forums and we provided opportunities for SOCP City representatives to present to our members at Chamber hosted events. The Chamber has actively engaged and encouraged our members to participate in the SOCP community consultation process, promoted to members through the Chamber's numerous communications tools and vehicles.

The Chamber will continue to monitor developments on the SOCP and community-wide policies as the SOCP moves forward. The following represents key highlights and recommendations from our review of the June 2011 draft SOCP.

SOCP Part I: Our Community and Sustainability

I.3 - Emerging Job Generators & Workforce Skill Development, the SOCP states that "Outcomes of the *Workforce Development within a Rural Transitioning Economy* project will play a critical role in supporting economic well-being in Campbell River." This project, spearheaded by the CRDCC has provided a framework for collaborative community capacity building.

Recommendation:

- The City continues to support the CRDCC in its efforts to work collaboratively to achieve outcomes and future directions associated with the *Workforce Development within a Rural Transitioning Economy* project.

1.5 – Population growth drives demands for development and infrastructure.

Recommendation:

- Reassess the population growth estimates used in the SOCP document (1%) to incorporate worst case/best case scenarios of growth.

2.4 – Concurrent & Integrated Planning Processes – Economic sustainability is a vision that reflects community objectives and strategies to ensure that a strong economy

develops in the future. An Economic prosperity plan and economic development strategy were not part of the parallel planning efforts integrated into the SOCP and should be a higher priority in the City's SOCP. The economic prosperity plan should establish principles to shape public policies to connect our economic strength to a healthy community.

Recommendation:

- The City initiates a process to develop an Economic Prosperity Framework and subsequent Economic Development Strategy;
- The City integrates the Economic Prosperity Framework into Campbell River's SOCP.

3.6 – Creative & Diverse Community – Collaboration mentioned in this section should also include with 'business leaders and organizations'.

Recommendation:

- Continue to improve the business climate throughout the City of Campbell River to ensure fairness and continuity of the free enterprise principle as the best way to retain existing businesses and attract new businesses.

SOCP Part II: Place Strategy – Land Use, Housing, Parks & Natural Environment, Transportation & Mobility

The Chamber is in favour of improving the City of Campbell River's long term plan to remain relevant and sustainable by including incentives to steer growth in desired commercial locations. The Chamber opposes restrictions but is very much in favour of incentives that will make certain areas in the City more attractive to potential investors and developers. Easing development charges or other fees for development related services are within the purview of the municipal government. It has been over five years since the local economy has been able to sustain restrictive measures to guide economic growth. Currently, the economic climate in the region is such that perceived or real restrictions to economic development and growth would be detrimental to any future growth. The City should allow growth to occur wherever businesses decide to invest as the best policy and develop processes to screen applications and determine feasibility.

The SOCP should remain a positive general document outlining opportunities for growth and allowing business enterprise to flourish in the long term. The limitation to growth should only be allowed in a provision for a fair application process to assess the suitability of the desired enterprise where every reasonable plan should be treated fairly. The document should not restrict the process before such application is made.

The availability of affordable housing/rental accommodation has economic implication and a direct impact on the ability of businesses to retain current employees who have difficulty in meeting their housing needs, and the ability to recruit new employees into the region due to restricted housing. The Chamber encourages the City to continue to create incentives that encourage the creation of affordable and diverse housing units as part of their overall housing strategy. Do not use the official plan as a tool to restrict growth. However, the City can and should develop initiatives that would broaden the downtown residential base as the best incentive for businesses to choose downtown commercial locations.

Recommendation:

- Continue to provide incentives to make certain areas in the City more attractive to potential investors and developers;
- Provide a fair application process to assess the suitability of enterprises and development;
- Ensure that residential densities are transit supportive to encourage densification and reduce urban sprawl;
- Increase incentives to encourage the creation of more affordable housing units;
- Enhance incentives for developments to meet specific LEED or environmental criteria
- Provide clear and non-prejudicial way of assessing all business plans regardless of desired location
- Welcome future development that makes business sense, not only planning sense.

SOCP Part III: People Strategy – Relationships, Local Economy, Creative Community, Social Well-Being; Agriculture & Food Systems

Business and economic development tools are needed by Campbell River organization to attract and retain businesses in our region and support a healthy local economy. The City is encouraged to cooperate and collaborate with existing structures and organizations like the CRDCC, NIEFS, NIC, CRMISA, Rivercorp, Community Futures and others to support business retention and attraction and economic development capacity with a mandate for a healthy and prosperous local economy.

Recommendation:

- City should cooperate, collaborate and support organizations in creating or obtaining such business and economic development tools whenever and wherever possible.
- City should leverage existing community accord frameworks already developed by organizations such as NIEFS and CRMISA to further build strategies and policies into the SOCP

Part IV: Function Strategy – Sustainable Systems

Water and energy sustainability is vital to a healthy economy. In order to accommodate future growth the City needs to have a clear strategy for how to effectively manage the supply, employ conservation techniques and plan for periods of shortage.

The Chamber recognizes that the business community can take an active role in managing water and energy sustainability by gauging their consumption and using existing programs and resources available to them.

Recommendation:

- The City develop clear strategies for water and energy sustainability to ensure that the City is in a position to be able to provide for infrastructure to accommodate population growth needs that either meet or exceed expectation.

Part V: Development Permit Areas

Improving the building permit process and providing property tax incentives can be valuable in attracting commercial development downtown and other desired commercial locations.

Recommendation:

- Continue to improve the City's overall economic development programs and allow for continuous improvement on developing business friendly municipal processes in assessing development related applications.

The CRDCC looks forward to continued engagement and discussion regarding the recommendations and highlights provided as part of the ongoing SOCP development and review process.

Submitted by Gary Thulin, Chamber Board Chair and Colleen Evans, Chamber Executive Director