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Chair
OCP Update Committee
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Dear Committee Members,

This submission is a plea to the Committee to seek consensus, however possible, towards presenting a comprehensive “vision” for Bowen Island that our community can appreciate and support.

That “vision” needs to then be clearly articulated within our OCP Update document. I implore the OCP Committee to work closely with Islands Trust officials, and with the recently struck municipal National Parks Committee, and adviser, Mel Turner, as well as with the B.C. Conservancy, and our Bowen Island Conservancy branch, and with Metro Vancouver Parks Board.

Development is currently happening at an alarming rate, and the chain saws are ringing out daily! Projections for more of the same, and design plans, with accompanying density arguments, are already in front of Council.

Conflicting visions, dividing our community, might be lumped into roughly two groups - those who envision development and “change” along urban standards and practices, (albeit with inclusion of more environmentally-friendly initiatives involving energy-generating alternatives, methods of rain conservation, the use of earth-friendly construction materials, and better ways of measuring and controlling green-house gas emissions).

As well, this group adopts the provincially designed “Smart Growth” directives for urban communities that promote transportation options that would reduce reliance on petroleum products and thus the emissions of GHG via our automobiles. Such incentives have been woven into “clustering” in building design plans that include density objectives that seem acceptable because the trade off becomes the promise of more “green space” retention. Further supportive arguments and incentives have to do with providing “affordable housing” in such development plans; expectations of less reliance on the automobile; and, what is described as the prevention of “urban sprawl”.

Although difficult to address, the operative word in all of the above is, “urban”. No environmentalist that I’m aware of would argue with all and any advances in the understanding of how to best supply energy needs, reduce GHG, and conserve water and green space! In fact, the early environmentalists initiated the movement!

Thus the second group, or the other visionaries, are those making up members of the population of Bowen Island not at all comfortable with open-ended building approaches for an island ecology, either with or without all the “green” building incentives! Many, in fact, are actively endorsing and promoting a welcoming Snug Cove Village

atmosphere with island ambiance intact – not a big city facsimile of urban structures and density presenting a completely different island environment with all of the accompanying over-crowding and traffic congestion that inevitably results.

In support of the Islands Trust mandate to preserve and protect, the second group subscribes to a philosophy, a belief system, that embraces that objective as the primary element of consideration in envisioning what this island will look like 20 or 30 years from now.

To the second group, the value in retaining our nautical, poetic Village entrance (sensitively, and attractively spruced up), ensures not only the appeal of an island paradise, (and a “shop Bowen” incentive to all and sundry), but sets, as a precedent, the preservation and protection of the natural environment not only at the entrance to Bowen, but throughout the island! Valuing our rural, English countryside landscape with thoughtful, to-scale building structures, and lasting vistas of open spaces, is truly the way to advertise Bowen’s special purpose! And, in accordance with the Islands Trust mandate, it will also ensure the serious and dedicated preservation of our forests, wetlands, lakes, rivers, foreshore, and our clean, naturally filtered water supply for the forest animals, fish and amphibians, the insects, birds, and us! And, as well, for the enjoyment and amazement of all visiting friends, and appreciative tourists!

Thus, our OCP document is, and will be, the determiner of the legacy we leave as we design now with whichever vision dominates.

Some have actually suggested that any land use and zoning restrictions described in the OCP be tossed out, and that any population cap projection be rejected. This is, of course, the description of the old “supply and demand” control element in the free market conceptual model.

Its merits, especially in a finite island ecology, become untenable, and so there is the need for restraints and restrictions to be even more vigorously embodied in our OCP Update’s final document. Really, it’s not just about us; Bowen belongs to the citizens of the province, and of Canada.

The National Park initiative, with unknown outcome, is coming at this so critical time in Bowen’s evolution as it happens through the mechanism of the OCP Update. The Update is our blueprint for the future in that, how land use bylaws, and zoning restrictions, along with population projections will be written, and will become the legal guide to development; its amount, form, and character. The welcoming prospect of National Park status will be something of a global recognition in securing the protection of already zoned parkland on surplus municipal land, of Crown Lands, and possibly willingness for negotiations of environmentally sensitive private lands as well.

At this time in history, consideration of the profit motive and drive for development needs to be set aside, and respect for protection of the natural environment on Bowen Island needs to be of paramount consideration by our OCP Committee and our municipal government.

It is possible therefore, to suggest that real and lasting profit to the Country, to the Province, and to Bowen Island lies in the protection and preservation of Bowen Island's natural environment.

Respectfully submitted

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