

Bowen Island OCP Update Comments

1. OCP Process – Update vs Review

The claim that only an update is needed because the core ideas and principles in the current OCP are sound may seem logical given that most of its contents are still sound and honourable may seem obvious and logical. In fact, the OCP document has value as a source of guidance only to the extent that it reflects shared values and a shared vision. These we do not have, as the recent Cape Roger Curtis and artificial turf field episodes have demonstrated. The OCP itself was used to show that the CRC Neighbourhood Plan was both consistent and inconsistent with the OCP, depending on the section invoked. For one thing, many of us use the same words to mean very different things – nature, environment, community, development, sustainability, density, rural, ‘preserve and protect.’ An OCP update or review that does not facilitate the articulation of shared values through bringing into the open points of tension or conflict so that they can be examined safely does not serve us well in the long run.

2. Understanding the OCP We Have

Our current OCP is long and difficult to read and make sense of. It would be helpful to have a version on the website that organizes the contents (including amendments) under headings that relate to the ‘broad objectives’ as well as the chapter headings, extracts fundamental portions, and places the elaborations and qualifications in appendices. The same should be done for the objectives for each section the OCP.

I do not understand the relationship between the broad objectives and the objectives in the individual sections and hope that this will be improved (re-organized) and made more apparent in the next version so that we can begin to monitor how we are doing.

I would appreciate from our consultant an account of lessons learned regarding other communities’ OCPs – scope of contents, length, etc.

3. Informed Discussion – Evaluating the Objectives

Objectives imply the intention to accomplish them – presumably the OCPlan is meant to be a blueprint for achieving objectives; plans are implementation tools. Without that intention, it is arguably wiser to not create objectives. If we are to be asked to assess the broad objectives in the current plan (and presumably also the objectives under each chapter heading), then we need information to help us to assess our success in implementing them so far and to evaluate whether they continue to be the right objectives for us. This means providing data that is relevant to the discussion. By all means post and link to the abundant documents, policy statements and reports – but also extract what is relevant into accessible discussion papers.

It important that the discussion about the OCP be well-informed, and that people have confidence in the information provided. The best engagement processes are learning events where people come away with a deeper understanding, and an appreciation for the complexity of an issue that helps them reflect on their own positions and even consider shifting them. One approach would be to prepare a draft discussion paper on each topic soon (based on the broad objectives and the chapter topics), and post them in a set of online forums so that people can critique and add comments; a final collaborative version would then become the basis for discussion at community meetings.

4. The Principles

This is a critical section of our OCP that needs serious time and attention during the process. Principles in this type of context are statements describing our core values. Glaring omissions in the minds of many would likely include principles such as sustainability, mitigation of and adaptation to climate change impacts, a diverse and inclusive community, taking responsibility for our externalized environmental, economic and social impacts, and reducing our ecological and development footprint.

5. Reaching Bowen Islanders

If the goal is to engage all Bowen Islanders, then a communications campaign is what's needed. At its most methodical and effective, it would track participation by each resident, working with a list built from the Gold Pages, election lists, and taxpayer lists. The goal would not have been achieved until every resident had been connected with, according to criteria to be established – perhaps at the very least inclusion in the OCP Update listserve or a phone conversation with a committee member.

Effective outreach has to consist of going to where people can be connected with, as successful politicians and marketers know well, which includes all media such as newspapers, mail drop, online forums, BIMLink, Facebook, Twitter, listserves (such as BIM's), and phone surveys. However, the personal connections are of equal or greater value, generating powerful word-of-mouth reverberations. I recommend that a pair of Steering Committee members as OCP ambassadors prepared with a presentation and coached on facilitation methods attend a meeting of every society and formalized group on the island, and also that you invite neighbourhoods, employers and informal groups to organize information sessions that could be facilitated by a committee member. An on-ferry chat booth on designated sailings and a table at the Ruddy and General Store on Saturdays are other examples of what could be in the community engagement mix. The evaluation of the completed OCP process should include a thorough engagement and participation report.

6. Deliverable

Please describe the final deliverable, or at least the possibilities if the specifics will be determined during the process. Will the review result in yet another amendment? Will the accumulated amendments to-date be consolidated into the OCP both before public consultation to facilitate understanding and in the final document, to which an amendment representing the product of the review will be added? Will there be a single consolidated document presented to Council with key changes tracked?

7. OCP Committee

I believe that the community deserves to see profiles of the OCP committee members on the website, including a photo, indication of how they were appointed, their areas of expertise, a history of their participation in and contribution to Bowen's community life, a list of groups on Bowen they are part of, a statement of their core values regarding the future of Bowen Island, and a description of what they believe they bring to the OCP leadership process.

8. OCP Conduct Principles

It would be good to see on the website a statement of the guiding principles for the conduct of the OCP process, so that the community can have confidence in the process – e.g., transparency, fully informed residents, goal of X% engagement, etc.

9. Role of Council

Please explain what the role of Council is during the process. From a discussion at a recent Council meeting and also from a Councillor Frinton's and the Mayor's comments at the Open House on June 25th, I have the impression that there is a strong desire to shape the discussion agenda and influence the content of the update, yet this seems to be seeping in belatedly from the sides rather than through an explicit upfront process. I know that Council has much knowledge and wisdom with which to inform the process and am not objecting; I also expect that the Mayor and Councillors will participate in the discussions as citizens with their council hats removed. However, it is important that we understand Council's role at all stages given that the final deliverable must receive Council approval before going to a public hearing.

An old gem

A vision without a plan is but a dream.

A plan without a vision is sheer drudgery.

A vision with a plan can change the world.

Adapted from the Mount Abu Declaration, India, 1989