

## Discussion Paper for the OCP IDEAS Forum

From the board of the Cape Roger Curtis Trust Society, Oct. 11, 2009

The 13 Broad Objectives in the OCP – We believe that there are too many objectives and that they are overly vague and subject to broad interpretation. We would like to see this set of objectives reduced and more specifically defined. While it is always useful to articulate who and what we are as a community, it is equally useful to spend time defining those things that we are not. Since an OCP review sets direction for only a limited time into the future (5–7 years, we understand), perhaps we might consider prioritizing, and therefore narrowing, the goals we set for ourselves coming out of this OCP review.

### Needs

We believe that the on-going loss and diminishing of our natural environment, pollution of our land and oceans, and loss of plant and animal diversity, requires our attention. These are directly impacted and worsened by our development activities, resource use and extraction, and over population (relative to our overall eco-system capacity). These are planet-wide concerns, and they have become defining issues for our community.

Biodiversity – We are uncomfortable with development and subdivision plans that continue to threaten Bowen's biodiversity. We strongly support the Greenways initiative, in that it aims to prioritize and place stronger controls on preserving and maintaining Bowen's biodiversity, including wildlife habitats and native vegetation in their natural state. We need special consideration given to wildlife, plants, and ecosystems that are considered endangered, threatened, or of special concern. And we need a strategy for dealing with invasive species.

Affordability – We are concerned that our need for affordable housing and senior's housing will too often be tied to expansive development, as happened with the CRC Neighbourhood Plan proposal. We need to focus on increasing rental housing availability for those Bowen residents not looking to buy, and to consider additional low-impact solutions for families needing houses (for example, enabling suitable properties to build small accessory buildings and/or cottages for rental). We need to look at new and affordable market housing, but in a way that anticipates and helps us to manage our future population growth and the challenges that come with it, rather than by simply accommodating market demand.

Community center – Bowen desperately needs a community center. The vitality and strength of Gulf Island communities thrives when there is an essential space for neighbours to meet and do their collective work. We volunteer on Bowen, we meet often and we need a dedicated gathering place.

## Ambitions

Managing growth and enforcing limits – At present, municipal staff cannot tell us what our current allowable build-out looks like (a map and figures would be helpful), nor what our current population is, once secondary suites are included. It is, therefore, hard to feel confident about comprehensive planning when so many fundamental questions remain unanswered. We need to integrate our knowledge, underpinned by the long list of studies created for this community, into objective and scientific baseline information on the island's natural resources (e.g. water) and ecosystems, thereby establishing a growth rate (particularly one that is sensitive to ecosystems). The goal is to preserve our green space for livability, health and carbon capture.

Multiple hub or single hub development – This was a key question raised in the Sustainability Workshop led by Mark Holland, though it was never debated or decided. It is a key contextual consideration affecting Bowen's future growth. We have witnessed developers seeking to create villages in Seymour Cove and on Cape Roger Curtis, though the community has yet to decide if this is an appropriate shape for island growth. Our preference is that a single strong hub in Snug Cove be the focus for business, for senior's housing, affordable housing, and community amenities.

## Thoughts About Bowen's Future

'Death by a thousand cuts' – Many of us feel that our island is steadily on its way to becoming a bedroom community of Vancouver. We witness growing house sizes and developments, heavy and continuous tree cutting, limited coastline access, etc. Do we need to cap house sizes, better define and demand clustering of new housing, set a new population cap (that includes secondary suites), establish tree cutting limits, etc.? These don't necessarily have to be hard caps; they could be incentive driven or done as trade-offs. How do we further enhance the 'preserve and protect' mandate on our island?

Green infrastructure – We continue to imagine a Bowen with an interconnected network of open spaces and natural areas, such as greenways, wetlands, parks, forest preserves and native plant vegetation, that naturally manages storm water, reduces flooding risk and improves water quantity and quality, and that may help moderate the effects of wind, solar exposure, sound, and pollution.

Citizen tools – We encourage the Municipality to create a fund to support small, citizen-led initiatives, not so much to launch new proposals but more to support startups already gaining traction (like, for example, the Bowen Agriculture Alliance). This initiative might draw out some of the younger and more original thinking crowd living on our island.

Reflecting on the future of Cape Roger Curtis, we remain profoundly perplexed. Even though the Bowen community has stated clearly, consistently and with a large plurality, through public meetings, petitions, professional polling, etc., that it does not want to

see a subdivision on such a special and unique place as Cape Roger Curtis (subdivision being the least imaginative form for development); how is it that we are nonetheless facing that very outcome? What needs to happen to strengthen our government and political culture, our planning procedures and our public discourse, to allow us to aim higher and do better? Can the OCP review process speak to this concern?