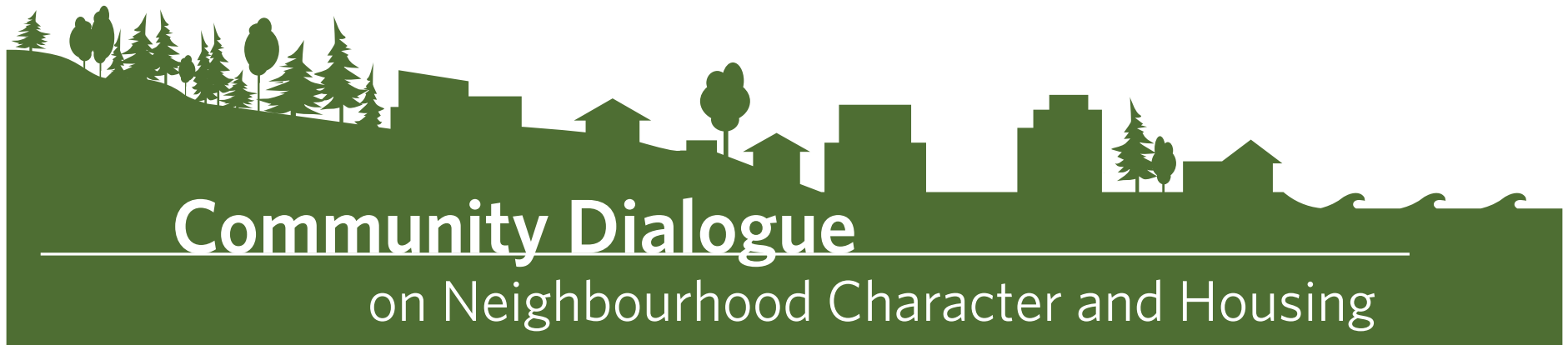


WORKING GROUP REPORT & RECOMMENDATIONS

September 2008



Community Dialogue

on Neighbourhood Character and Housing

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Community Dialogue on Neighbourhood Character and Housing Working Group has guided a year-long consultation process with the residents of West Vancouver. This has provided a forum for an in-depth discussion and debate on neighbourhood character and housing issues.

The Community Dialogue was a process of ‘people talking to people’ about the future of their neighbourhoods, and issues related to housing choice and affordability. The Working Group has asked questions, and has listened to what residents have to say about both the issues and possible actions for addressing them.

The success of this program is evidenced by the active participation of West Vancouver residents during all phases of the Community Dialogue, and the strong turnout at all public events. Key information tools, special events and other input opportunities included: community workshops, a public forum, newsletters, surveys, information displays, presentations, and an online discussion forum.

The importance of housing and neighbourhood character issues to the citizens of West Vancouver can be measured by the enthusiastic response to the Community Dialogue as a forum for meaningful community input, and public confidence that residents’ voices will be heard, and that the process will



lead to real action on the issues. Hundreds of residents participated in the Community Dialogue and voiced their opinions on the issues and ideas raised by fellow residents. The recommendations put forward in this report reflect those voices and ideas.

A common theme which emerged during the Community Dialogue is the intense desire by residents to protect the distinctive characteristics that have made West Vancouver such a unique community. At the same time, residents acknowledge that doing nothing will not achieve this objective, and that the community ‘needs to change to effectively stay the same’. Through the Dialogue, we gained the understanding that we have to make some changes to the structure of our community if we are to protect what we value, and if we hope to remain in the community as our own needs (e.g., housing, support services) change over time.

Based on the results of the Community Dialogue, it is clear that a majority of West Vancouver residents would like to see thoughtful and effective actions undertaken by Council to address real community concerns over housing choice and affordability, and the changing character of West Vancouver’s established neighbourhoods.

Residents told us that some of the housing and neighbourhood character issues raised during the Dialogue have been talked about for years. Residents embraced the Community Dialogue as an opportunity to express their frustrations over a lack of action on these issues, and to emphasize a growing sense of urgency for taking the appropriate actions now.

The outcome of the Community Dialogue on Neighbourhood Character and Housing is, by necessity, a plan for action – both for the residents of West Vancouver, and for District Council

and staff. This 'plan' is embodied in the Working Group's recommendations.

This report includes an overview of the Community Dialogue in Part 'A' - specifically the objectives, process, and key findings. The Working Group's recommendations are presented in Part 'B'.

The Working Group has considered all public input, and has formulated its recommendations in consideration of the OCP's vision for a sustainable community, and an understanding of the policy and regulatory tools available to local government.

There are a total of 20 recommendations pertaining to District policies, regulations, and processes. The recommendations are briefly described below:

- To enhance and protect neighbourhood character by:
 - Articulating the character of distinct neighbourhoods in key District policies
 - Making construction more 'neighbour friendly'
 - Encouraging 'designing with nature'
 - Conserving our heritage
- To increase housing choice and improve housing affordability by:
 - Amending key District policies to recognize alternate housing types

- Legitimizing secondary suites in single-family dwellings
- Exploring new housing types
- Developing an affordable housing strategy
- Encouraging environmentally sustainable housing and landscape design
- To ensure the livability of new and established neighbourhoods through:
 - The creation of additional village service nodes
 - Opportunities for reducing reliance on the private automobile
- To ensure that the "dialogue" continues through:
 - Pilot projects to demonstrate and test out ideas proposed during the Community Dialogue
 - Ongoing public education on housing and neighbourhood character issues
 - Exploration of complex issues through the use of community workshops

The Working Group's recommendations are presented for consideration and further action by Council.

West Vancouver presents many challenges, including its dramatic topography, distinctive neighbourhoods, and changing demographic profile - all of which make it difficult to apply any 'one-size fits all policies'. A unique community demands unique solutions. West Vancouver can and must rise to the challenge, because a do-nothing approach will not keep West Vancouver as the community we remember, we know today, and we want in the future.



The Community Dialogue on Neighbourhood Character and Housing was undertaken by the District of West Vancouver during 2007 – 2008, and was led by a Working Group of West Vancouver citizens:

- Susan Anderson
- Christine Banham (Chair)
- David Crilly
- Jacqueline Gijssen
- Andy Krawczyk (Vice- Chair)
- Freda Pagani
- Barbara Pettit
- Beverley Pitman
- Keith Pople

Councillor John Clark was the Council Liaison; and Stephen Mikičich was the Staff Liaison.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The success of the Community Dialogue on Neighbourhood Character and Housing is in large part due to the enthusiastic participation of West Vancouver residents. The issues and ideas discussed during the Dialogue are fundamental to the future of West Vancouver, and the vision for building a truly sustainable community.

The Working Group would like to thank the many West Vancouver residents who participated in the Community Dialogue by attending events such as the Neighbourhoods Fair, Public Forum on Housing, and Community Workshops; and provided their input through the online forum, questionnaires, community survey, and verbal and written comments.

The Working Group would like to thank West Vancouver School District 45 and, in particular, Geoff Jopson, Chris Sandor, Nicola Colhoun, Chantal Trudeau, and the students of Cedardale Elementary School and West Vancouver Secondary School who participated in the Community Dialogue through a student art project and community survey.

We would also like to acknowledge several District of West Vancouver staff that assisted in implementing Community Dialogue events and Working Group meetings, and/or provided input on newsletters, questionnaires, reports and online information. They include:

- Leanne Sexsmith
- Claudia Freire
- Joshua Bassett
- Rosemary Roberts
- Geri Boyle
- Steve Nichols
- Bob Sokol



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PART A:

BACKGROUND & CONTEXT



1.0 THE COMMUNITY DIALOGUE

West Vancouver's Official Community Plan (OCP) identifies housing and neighbourhood character as central issues in our community. Some people are concerned about housing choice and affordability – both for seniors and younger households. Others are concerned about the changing character of their neighbourhoods, as older houses are replaced with new, larger ones.

During the OCP review process in 2004, it became apparent that there are diverse views about housing and neighbourhood issues in West Vancouver, and that more work was needed before more focused policy directions could be identified. Since that time, staff have prepared a series of background reports on demographic and population trends in West Vancouver. These have now been compiled into one comprehensive volume, titled "West Vancouver Facts and Stats."

The Community Dialogue on Neighbourhood Character and Housing has proven to be a true 'dialogue':

- District staff have provided background information on demographic changes in the community.
- Residents have shared their concerns about housing and

neighbourhood character, and their ideas for addressing these issues.

- The Working Group has facilitated an open, inclusive discussion, and has listened to the community.

Throughout the Community Dialogue, a variety of communication tools and events have been used to engage residents in a year-long discussion of issues that are fundamentally important to the future of West Vancouver.

From the outset, one of the primary goals of the Working Group was to ensure that the process was as active and inclusive of West Vancouver citizens as possible. It was critical to involve a wide range of residents and to truly hear what it was they were saying. In this regard, the Working Group believes that this process has been highly successful, and that the findings and recommendations outlined in this report are a genuine reflection of what the broader community has to say on these matters.

Diverse viewpoints were welcomed throughout the process, and contributed to intelligent debate on the issues. In the end, we saw endorsement of the OCP vision for a sustainable community, and the emergence of number of common themes. These, in turn, have provided a framework for the Working Group's recommendations



1.1 THE WORKING GROUP

In 2007, Council appointed a volunteer Working Group of West Vancouver residents to assist District staff in designing and implementing a public participation program to engage the community in this important dialogue. The Working Group members are:

- Susan Anderson
- Christine Banham (Chair)
- David Crilly
- Jacqueline Gijssen
- Andy Krawczyk (Vice- Chair)
- Freda Pagani
- Barbara Pettit
- Beverley Pitman
- Keith Pople

Working Group members have employed their collective skills, experiences, and talents in assisting District staff with the Community Dialogue. Working Group roles have included advising on public engagement processes, planning and leading public events, facilitating workshops, and making formal presentations to Council throughout this process. Members have also provided guidance in the preparation of newsletters, information materials, and questions for a community survey and online forum.

The Working Group’s most challenging role has been to thoroughly consider the public input received during each phase of the Community Dialogue, and to report back to Council with feasible recommendations on how to best meet the housing needs in this community, and protect and enhance the established character of West Vancouver neighbourhoods



1.2 THE 'SPIRIT' OF THE DIALOGUE

The Community Dialogue on Neighbourhood Character and Housing was undertaken in the spirit of openness and inclusiveness. It has provided a public forum for discussion of fundamental issues facing our community.

The Working Group model has provided an opportunity for citizens to lead this process, and to reach out to the larger community to participate in the Community Dialogue.

The primary objectives for the Community Dialogue were to ensure a true 'dialogue', then to seek (if possible) a common understanding and appreciation of key housing and neighbourhood character issues facing this community, and to identify and examine possible approaches for addressing these issues.

While the Dialogue is considered to have been a success in engaging residents in the process and hearing their opinions, it was not without challenges. The Working Group struggled in the early stages of the Dialogue to reconcile and be respectful of opposing viewpoints, to ensure that the Dialogue would engage the public, and that it would provide meaningful opportunities for citizen voices to be heard and translated into effective recommendations for action.

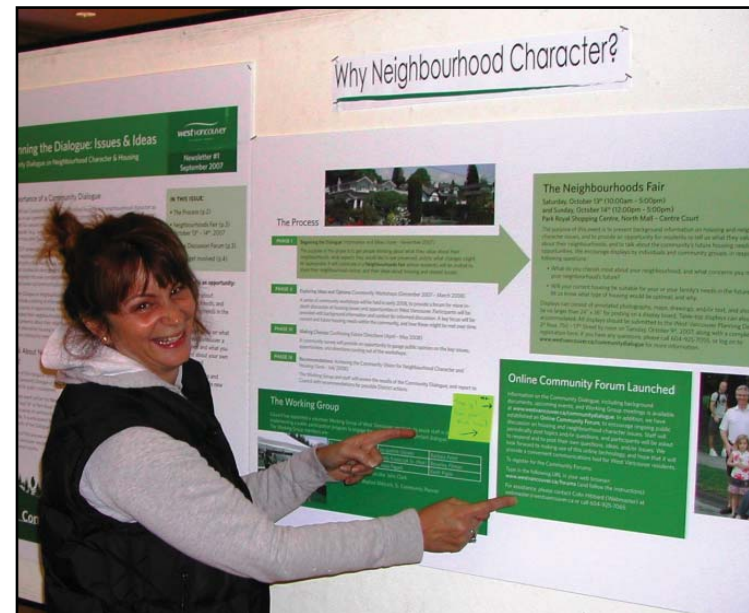


1.3 THE PROCESS

The Community Dialogue on Neighbourhood Character and Housing was a phased process that included:

- Preparing comprehensive population and demographic information (West Vancouver Facts and Stats)
- Encouraging residents to start thinking about housing and neighbourhood character issues, and to share their own concerns and experiences
- Facilitating a process of informed discussion - which included presentations, displays, workshops, a public forum, and community survey
- Using input from West Vancouver residents to fashion possible solutions to the issues
- Surveying the broader community for further input on the issues, and testing out the willingness of residents to 'try out' new ideas
- Developing recommendations for updating District policies and regulations, in response to the findings of the Community Dialogue

The preliminary findings of the Community Dialogue were presented to Council through interim reports on December 3, 2007, May 5, 2008, and July 14, 2008. The Working Group's final report and recommendations are contained herein, and are presented for Council's consideration in September 2008. The next steps will be determined by Council's consideration of the Working Group's recommendations. Any changes to District policies or regulations, as a result of these recommendations, would be undertaken within the framework of due process, including opportunities for further community input.



1.4 THE WORK PROGRAM

The work program for the Community Dialogue was undertaken as follows:

Phase I - Beginning the Dialogue: Information and Ideas (June - November 2007)

The purpose of this phase was to get people thinking about what they value about their neighbourhoods, what aspects they would like to see preserved, and/or what changes might be appropriate. It included an information display at Community Day (June), an initial questionnaire, presentations to community groups, and a Neighbourhoods Fair (October), where over 400 residents shared their neighbourhood visions and their ideas about housing and related issues. Residents also embraced the online discussion forum, which proved to be a very effective tool for debating these issues. The online forum received over 2,300 'hits' during Phase I.

Phase II - Exploring Ideas and Options: Community Workshops (December 2007 - March 2008)

The Working Group hosted a public forum on housing in January 2008, titled: "Changes and Choices: The West Vancouver Housing Dilemma." The event was held at the Kay

Meek Centre, and attended by 200 people, despite a daunting major snow storm. It was moderated by the respected urban planner, Ray Spaxman, and featured five guest panelists: Karl Gustavson, Cheeying Ho, Harold Kalke, Gordon Price, and Judi Whyte.

Two all-day community workshops (March 2008) provided residents with a forum for more in-depth discussion of neighbourhood character and housing issues in West Vancouver as well as opportunities for addressing these. Approximately 200 people participated in the workshops.

Phase III - Making Choices: Confirming Future Directions (April - May 2008)

A community survey was undertaken during May 2008. The purpose of the survey was to gauge further public opinion on the key issues, opportunities and directions that residents articulated during the Community Dialogue. The survey was conducted by Synovate, a professional research firm. Survey results are based on a total of 654 self-completed surveys. Key topic areas were:

- housing choice and affordability;
- neighbourhood character; and
- neighbourhood qualities, features, and amenities.

Survey findings were presented to Council in an interim report on July 21, 2008.



Phase IV - Recommendations: Achieving the Vision (June - September 2008)

During the final phase of the Community Dialogue, the Working Group considered all of the public input received over the past year, including key input from the community workshops and survey. Working Group recommendations were developed in consideration of:

- the Official Community Plan's vision for a sustainable community; and
- an understanding of the policy and regulatory tools available to local government.



2.0 VISION: A SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY

West Vancouver's Official Community Plan (OCP) outlines a vision for a sustainable community. "Sustainability" is tied to quality of life objectives, and requires the balancing of economic, environmental, and social issues in the community. This vision has provided both the context and framework for the Community Dialogue on Neighbourhood Character and Housing.

The OCP recognizes that West Vancouver's demographic profile has shifted from a fairly homogeneous population of mostly young families with children through most of its early history to the 1970s, to one of much greater economic and ethnic diversity, and a greater proportion of older residents and smaller families. A fundamental component of social sustainability is a mix of housing forms appropriate for meeting the diverse and changing needs of the community.

This Vision is echoed in the 2006-2008 Corporate Business Plan, which includes the following sustainability objectives:

- To deliver a high quality of life, and bring people together to create a strong and vibrant community.
- To ensure that we protect the integrity of our natural environment, and encourage 'design with nature' practices, and employ green building practices when making policy and operational decisions.

A discussion of "neighbourhood character" issues has provided the broader context for consideration of possible new housing types, and for ensuring that new development 'fits' with the established physical and social fabric of our neighbourhoods.



3.0 KEY THEMES FROM THE 'DIALOGUE'

During the Community Dialogue, there was widespread recognition that change is constant and that 'only one or two sizes' (e.g., houses or high-rises) no longer 'fit' all in this community:

- West Vancouver has evolved from a community of traditional family households (mother, father, and multiple children) to one of many 'empty-nesters' (where children have grown and moved out), seniors (both couples and increasing numbers of older residents living on their own), smaller households (with fewer or no children), and conversely, households embracing extended families and multi-generations.
- Our neighbourhoods are changing, as existing modest houses are replaced with much larger ones that include significant alterations to the surrounding landscape. The issue, however, is less about the style of new houses but rather, how this new development is integrated within existing neighbourhoods.
- Residents also see redevelopment as an opportunity to facilitate the growth of a more socially, environmentally, and economically sustainable community.

Coming out of these themes are some fundamental



planning challenges for West Vancouver:

- How to provide for improved housing choice and affordability; specifically, the **right size** and **right type** of housing:
 - for an aging population;
 - for people who require assisted living; and
 - for attracting younger households to prevent community stagnation?
- How to achieve more affordable housing in close proximity to existing community services and amenities.
- How to meet the changing housing needs of West Vancouver residents by providing new housing opportunities within their own neighbourhoods, while maintaining the character of those neighbourhoods.
- How to meet the challenges of 'designing with nature' and encouraging both the rural, natural character of West Vancouver, and environmentally sustainable development within dramatically different areas of the community with different character attributes.

4.0 THE PERSONAL STORIES

Throughout the Community Dialogue, residents shared their personal stories with one another. Through this process of open dialogue, the Working Group heard about the desires and struggles of individual residents wanting to maintain their homes and neighbourhoods, and to remain in the community over the long term – even as their needs and abilities change over time.

While each story was unique, similar messages were heard over and over again. These narratives are retold below, although fictionalized to protect the privacy of the individuals. These stories typical of what the Working Group heard about the experiences of many West Vancouver residents. Taken together, these stories illustrate some of the key housing challenges in West Vancouver:

- Maria and Renato, now in their 80s, have remained in their single-family home of 50 years, because they cannot find a smaller, more manageable housing unit in closer proximity to retail and community services. Given their limited mobility, they are finding themselves more and more isolated in their Gleneagles neighbourhood, and are seeing their independence erode. With declining health, they are very uncertain about their future.
- Katharine is a recently widowed senior on a fixed-income. While she has been able to find a condominium for sale close to transit and other services, she would not have any money remaining from the sale of her house. She cannot afford to move within West Vancouver, and will have to leave her community of 35 years to find appropriate, more affordable housing.
- Daniel and Leanne are empty-nesters living in a modest house on a large lot. They would like to build a detached house in their backyard to accommodate their son and his young family, while maintaining some peace and privacy for themselves. Their son will never be able to afford a single-family home in the community he was raised in. Under existing regulations, however, they have only two options: build an addition to the house to create a modest ‘in-law’ suite or replace their character home with a large new house. The latter option would be out of character with other houses on their street.
- George is a West Vancouver firefighter with a young family. He lives in Port Coquitlam and commutes to West Vancouver several days a week. Like many of his colleagues, who are unable to afford to live in West Vancouver, he may not be able to get to this community in the event of a major emergency. He is very concerned about the broader implications for public safety.



- Arthur and Grace were both born and raised in West Vancouver. Now in their late 50s, they are looking to their future housing needs, and realize that they will need some flexibility to accommodate Arthur's mom over the short term, and possibly their adult daughter when she moves back to West Vancouver in a couple of years. While they have the financial means to afford a large new single-family house, they would prefer to live in a smaller lower-maintenance house, with detached accommodation for family members and possibly a care-giver in the future. They would still like to have a garden and backyard, as do most West Vancouverites, but on a smaller more manageable scale that is appropriate to their stage in life.
- Doug, a retired professional, is concerned about the changes he sees in his neighbourhood, and rumours about increasing "density". He wants his single-family neighbourhood to stay the same, but is frustrated by the 'clear cutting' of lots, and the infiltration of large new houses.
- Evangeline is a single mother raising two teenaged children. After the modest house she rented for five years was sold and a new house was built on the site, she was unable to find suitable rental housing for her family. They are currently living in a small basement suite; but, as this form of accommodation is 'illegal', they have no security of tenure, and may need to move out of the community to find something more suitable and more permanent.
- Archibald is a widower in his 70s. Although he's been healthy and active his whole life, a recent stroke has left him with some physical challenges. He can no longer maintain his home without assistance, and needs to make modifications to enable one-level living, and improve safety.
- Sandra is a mentally challenged adult whose parents have reached the age when they can no longer drive to North Vancouver to visit her in the group home in which she lives. They would like to see her established in a group home in West Vancouver where they can visit easily and know, when they die, she is reasonably competent in this new environment.



PART B:

WORKING GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS

This section outlines the Working Group's recommendations for addressing issues related to neighbourhood character and housing, based on community input from West Vancouver residents over the past year. The Working Group has sought community input on these issues and ideas for addressing them. Various means have been employed to engage West Vancouver residents in this important discussion, including: an initial questionnaire, written submissions, comment sheets at public events, an online discussion forum, and opportunities for public comments at all Community Dialogue events.

The Working Group used this input in developing questions for the Community Dialogue survey in May 2008. The purpose of the survey was to solicit further input on issues and ideas, and to gauge broader public support for possible actions.

There are a total of 20 recommendations, broken down by topic as follows:

- Neighbourhood Character (7 recommendations)
- Housing Choice and Affordability (7 recommendations)
- Future Neighbourhood Planning (2 recommendations)
- Continuing the Dialogue (3 recommendations)

The recommendations pertain to District policies, regulations, and processes, and are to be considered by Council for concurrent implementation.



1.0 LEADERSHIP AND VISION

RECOMMENDATION #1.1

Building a Sustainable Community

Revise District policies, regulations, and processes to achieve the sustainable community that is envisioned in the OCP; a vision that has been further endorsed through the Community Dialogue on Neighbourhood Character and Housing.

Discussion

The Community Dialogue has confirmed community support for the OCP vision for a socially, environmentally, and economically sustainable community, and the high level policies and objectives contained in the OCP.

There is strong community support for taking proactive steps in implementing the OCP vision in the following ways: a demonstration program for testing out ideas; new policy and regulatory tools to enable the provision of new housing types, to achieve social sustainability goals; and stronger measures to protect the character of West Vancouver's distinct neighbourhoods.

Sustainability

The OCP recognizes that West Vancouver's demographic profile has shifted from a fairly homogeneous population of mostly young families with children, to one of increasing economic and ethnic diversity, and a greater proportion of older residents and smaller families. A fundamental component of social sustainability is the availability of appropriate housing forms to meet the diverse and changing needs of the community.

Single detached housing will likely always play a significant role in the community, however, population trends indicate that the community may want to continue to work towards a greater proportion of alternatives, particularly ground oriented multi-unit options and creative adaptations to traditional single detached homes.

A growing number of older West Vancouver residents may be looking to downsize, reduce maintenance and lower costs now and in the future. Many residents have expressed interest in maintaining long term social balance, by looking at ways of creating relatively more affordable housing options for young families with children, and opportunities for people who work in West Vancouver to live in the community.

Greater awareness about how we make use of existing land and resources, and the implications of these choices in the context of environmental sustainability and global warming are also stimulating interest in exploring new ways of building and designing neighbourhoods – e.g., by working with a site's natural features and minimizing landform alteration, and employing sustainable building technologies and practices.



2.0 NEIGHBOURHOOD CHARACTER

RECOMMENDATION # 2.1

Articulating “Neighbourhood Character”

Prepare character statements for individual neighbourhoods to help articulate their character-defining elements, and the community values around these, for inclusion in the OCP.

Discussion

West Vancouver is recognized as a community of distinct neighbourhoods. The OCP calls for preserving and enhancing the character of individual neighbourhoods; and residents are concerned about the changing character of their neighbourhoods through redevelopment and alteration of established streetscapes. However, the character of many individual neighbourhoods is not articulated in the OCP or any other policy document.

The intent would be to use these ‘character statements’ as a framework for applying existing policies and regulations that respect and reflect the different types of neighbourhoods that make up the community of West Vancouver.

It is anticipated that neighbourhood character statements would be prepared over time, as opportunities or needs arise; or alternatively, through a comprehensive review and update of the OCP.

Recognizing that it will take time to develop individual neighbourhood character statements, more immediate attention to neighbourhood character concerns should start with a review of single-family zoning regulations, as outlined in Recommendation #2.2.

Throughout the Community Dialogue, residents expressed concern that changes were occurring quite rapidly, and that many of the issues raised had been raised before. Understanding that there is a growing sense of urgency in addressing neighbourhood character concerns, Recommendations #2.1 through #2.7 should be considered concurrently.



RECOMMENDATION # 2.2 Integrating New Houses in Established Neighbourhoods

Amend single-family zoning regulations to address community concerns over the integration of new houses into established neighbourhoods – in terms of the size of houses (floor area, siting, height, and massing) :

- Review current exclusions from floor area ratio or FAR (ratio of building floor area to site area) and consider changes to reduce the massing of homes.
- Consider reducing site coverage and allowing variances to setbacks to protect natural site features and improve access to views and sunlight for neighbours.

Discussion

Most resident concerns about changing neighbourhood character are associated with new house construction. Given the difference in size and scale of older v. newer houses, and differences in landscape treatment (informal v. formal); there can be a significant alteration of neighbourhood character, as well as privacy and view impacts for existing residents.

Under Section 919.1 of the Local Government Act, the District cannot designate a development permit area to establish objectives for the form and character of single family residential development. Zoning is the only regulatory tool available to the District for attempting to address these issues; however, it is recognized that zoning cannot be applied on a discretionary basis, and is inherently an imperfect tool for addressing 'character' issues. Note:



The District would have the ability to control form and character of 'infill' type housing (e.g., coach houses), which would fall under the definition of 'multi-family'.

2008 Community Dialogue Survey findings:

- 63% of West Vancouver residents feel that the new houses being built in their neighbourhoods are too big.
- Within this group, there is majority support for reducing the size of new houses in terms of site coverage (84%) and allowable floor area (69%).

Facts and Stats

Over half of West Vancouver's housing stock was built prior to 1970; this is a much higher proportion of older housing compared to the Metro Vancouver average, and has implications for existing neighbourhoods. As the housing stock ages, the more likely it is to be replaced with new housing.

A very active regional market for owned housing, combined with record high land values, has stimulated considerable new house construction in existing neighbourhoods – affecting the look, feel and character of the natural and built environments.

Between 2003 and 2007, there were over 400 demolitions of single-family houses in West Vancouver.



RECOMMENDATION # 2.3**Making the Construction Process More Neighbourly**

In order to address resident concerns over the negative impacts of new construction, such as truck traffic, parking, noise, vibrations, construction debris, blasting, hours of work, etc., - review and revise, if necessary:

- Building permit regulations pertaining to demolition, site preparation, and new house construction; and
- Bylaw enforcement provisions such as inspection practices, notification requirements, response to neighbour complaints, and adequacy of fines to ensure compliance with existing regulations

Discussion

Construction of new single-family houses in established neighbourhoods can be very disruptive to existing residents, particularly if the construction spans a long period of time, or if a number of homes are being built at the same time.

2008 Community Dialogue Survey findings:

- 66% of West Vancouver residents are concerned about disruptions from lengthy periods of house construction in their neighbourhoods.

RECOMMENDATION # 2.4**Protecting Boulevard and Streetscape Character**

Review the Boulevard Bylaw and the Boulevard Maintenance and Encroachment Policy, and any related guidelines to address resident concerns over loss of established neighbourhood character through:

- the introduction of fences, gates, and other 'hard' edge treatments, which are not in keeping with the semi-rural character of many West Vancouver neighbourhoods; and
- the 'privatization' of public space through encroachments onto boulevards, and unopened lane and road rights-of-way.

Note: "Boulevard" refers to the unpaved portion of a public road right-of-way, which is typically a grassy strip on either side of the paved roadway.

Discussion

Residents have expressed concern over the erosion of West Vancouver's 'semi-rural' character and encroachments onto boulevards and lane rights-of-way, which preclude public use and enjoyment – e.g., as walkways and trail connections through neighbourhoods.

Gated properties, hard edge boulevard treatments, and private encroachments into public spaces are also perceived by many residents as "un-neighbourly".



RECOMMENDATION # 2.5 Minimizing Site Alteration

Prepare regulations, guidelines and/or incentives to encourage designs that are more sympathetic to a site's natural features, and that minimize site alteration, and loss of trees and vegetation during site preparation for construction. For example:

- Allow variances to setbacks (while maintaining maximum site coverage restrictions) to protect natural site features and improve access to views and sunlight for neighbours. Consider a 'fast track' or streamlined approval process for such variances.
- Establish requirements or guidelines to minimize impermeable site surfaces.
- Determine how municipal incentives such as fast tracking of permits and/or reduction of permit fees could be used to encourage 'designing with nature'.
- Explore incentives for retrofitting existing properties (e.g., establish a "green fund" for homeowner grants to encourage replacing paved driveways with "grass-crete" or porous pavement).

Note: These aspects can be addressed through development permit guidelines for residential uses other than single-family.

Discussion

A common concern expressed during the Community Dialogue is extensive landform alteration associated with house construction – which may involve considerable tree removal, rock blasting, introduction of retaining walls, and alteration of drainage patterns. The notion of 'designing with nature' (i.e., designing a new building to fit within the existing landform character) is strongly supported by West Vancouver residents.

The concept of 'designing with nature' is consistent with the OCP's sustainability objectives, and is specifically addressed in the District's Corporate Business Plan for 2006-2008. Goal #7 "Design with Nature" (under Governance Promoting Sustainability) calls for an update of development policies and bylaws to ensure that housing development respects the natural environment wherever possible, and supports community sustainability goals.

2008 Community Dialogue Survey findings:

- 79% of residents support regulations or incentives for designing buildings to fit within a site's natural features or which require minimal site modification.



RECOMMENDATION # 2.6

Learning How to 'Design with Nature'

In concert with Recommendation #2.4, consider a demonstration program for examining how a site's natural features can be retained in new development, and use this program to:

- Determine what regulatory changes would be necessary to support the community objective of 'designing with nature' – i.e., working with a site's natural features, and minimizing site alteration through clear-cutting of trees, excessive blasting, and alteration of established landscape character; and
- Explore whether the expanded municipal powers for environmental regulation (Bill 27) re: greenhouse gas emissions could be employed to address neighbourhood character issues such as blasting, clear-cutting of trees, rainwater management, etc.

Discussion

Inherent in a 'design with nature approach' is sensitivity to existing site features – which vary across the District, between neighbourhoods, and between individual properties. Resulting design solutions may vary between different sites, but should be in keeping with the distinctive character of each neighbourhood.

Specific municipal regulatory tools should be identified to achieve a 'design with nature' approach to new development. Provincial legislation should be reviewed to identify other regulatory tools that could achieve sustainability objectives and preserve the established landscape character of West Vancouver neighbourhoods.

2008 Community Dialogue Survey findings:

- 70% of residents believe that pilot projects should be considered to allow for variances to regulatory bylaws, to encourage a 'design with nature' solution – to avoid excessive site blasting, retaining walls, and 'clear-cutting' of trees
- 65% support pilot projects to demonstrate environmentally-sustainable building and landscape design, construction, and operation systems.



RECOMMENDATION # 2.7 **Conserving Our Heritage Resources**

Develop an incentive program to encourage and support heritage conservation efforts by private property owners.

Discussion

West Vancouver's built and natural heritage resources are integral components of the community's history and neighbourhood character. Through Provincial heritage legislation (Local Government Act and Community Charter), it is possible to formally recognize the heritage value of buildings, structures, landscapes, and whole neighbourhoods or districts within the municipality.

The District has recently established the West Vancouver Community Heritage Register. Thirty-four historic sites (buildings and landscapes) have been added to the Register, and Council is presently considering a further 138 nominated resources. Over time, other resources will be evaluated for nomination to the Register.

The Community Heritage Register provides both formal recognition of heritage value and eligibility for conservation and incentive tools that may be offered by the District.

There are three types of municipal conservation incentives: financial (grants, tax incentives, access to senior government funding); non-financial (land use and development variances, regulatory

provisions); and support tools (technical assistance, streamlined applications, eligibility for special provisions in the BC Building Code Heritage Building Supplement).

Other heritage conservation tools available to local government include:

- *Temporary heritage protection*
- *Heritage conservation covenant*
- *Heritage Revitalization Agreement (HRA)*
- *Heritage designation*
- *Heritage alteration permit*
- *Heritage conservation area*
- *Tree protection*

These are described in Appendix C to the District of West Vancouver's Heritage Strategic Plan (2006).



3.0 HOUSING CHOICE AND AFFORDABILITY

RECOMMENDATION # 3.1

Amending OCP Housing Policies

Amend the OCP, as may be required, to enable consideration of new housing types to meet the current and future needs of West Vancouver residents.

Discussion

A key OCP objective is to “provide for a diversity of housing types in keeping with existing neighbourhood qualities to accommodate a balanced and diverse population.”

Having conducted the Community Dialogue on Neighbourhood Character and Housing, we now have a better understanding of what housing types are desired and which types have either broad or localized support.

Amendments to the OCP would be required to add or amend policies to enable zoning changes to provide for legal secondary suites, and new ‘infill’ housing types such as coach houses, two modest houses on one lot, and/or other types which may be appropriate



2008 Community Dialogue Survey findings:

- 84% of residents believe that a greater variety of housing types is needed in West Vancouver to meet the community’s social, economic, and environmental sustainability objectives.

Facts and Stats

- High proportion of seniors (almost 1 in 4 residents); with the 80+ age group being the fastest growing segment of the seniors population;
- 15% of residents have difficulty with daily activities due to a disability;
- Gradually declining proportion of young adults and young children;
- Growing proportion of young adults living at home with parents;
- Housing prices and building costs more than doubled in five years while income levels (particularly for seniors) have not kept pace;
- Increasing cultural diversity, with more varied living arrangements;
- Single parent families are on the rise and now comprise 12% of all families. Most are headed by women.



RECOMMENDATION # 3.2

Allowing Secondary Suites

Develop an implementation program for allowing secondary suites, which would:

- identify issues around suites (e.g., safety, accessibility, parking, garbage, taxation, etc.), and the appropriate mechanisms for addressing these;
- recommend a process and criteria for legalizing suites (including existing suites, new suites in older houses, and purpose-built suites in new houses); and
- provide for amendments to zoning and other bylaws to allow secondary suites.

Discussion

Secondary suites play a key role in the rental housing market, in the absence of purpose-built rental accommodation. Throughout the Community Dialogue, there has been strong public support for the legalization of secondary suites, as a means of achieving greater housing variety and affordability within single-family neighbourhoods, with little alteration to the physical characteristics of these neighbourhoods.

The OCP recognizes the secondary suite as an important source of rental housing in the community, and as a potential mortgage helper for homeowners. It includes a policy direction to explore mechanisms for legalizing secondary suites.

Rental housing is generally more affordable than ownership, and more flexible for people whose lifestyles or housing requirements may change over the shorter term. Such people include newly-established households, independent seniors who may require assisted living in the near future, and individuals who may be residing in the community for shorter durations due to school, work, or other reasons..

In West Vancouver, rental housing is particularly important for accommodating young adults and older seniors.

2008 Community Dialogue Survey findings:

- 74% of residents indicated support for legal secondary suites

2007 Community Survey findings:

- 75% of residents support allowing secondary suites (with restrictions)

Facts and Stats:

Over the past decade, there has been a slow decline in the proportion of rental housing in the community (from 25% in 1996 to 23% in 2006).

This trend is occurring in communities throughout the region, because returns on investment in rental housing are much lower than other investment options, and there are no federal government tax incentives to encourage rental housing construction.

- 2006 census data indicates approximately 640 secondary suites in West Vancouver.



RECOMMENDATION # 3.3 Considering 'Infill' Housing

Develop policies and criteria to determine under which conditions 'infill' housing would be suitable.

Discussion

During the Community Dialogue, residents identified key housing gaps in West Vancouver; specifically, the need for more housing options for young families, young adults, empty nesters, and smaller households – including lone parent families; as well as opportunities for older residents to age in place in their own community.

The notion of a detached house is still highly valued in West Vancouver, but residents would like to see more variations to this traditional housing form, such as smaller units (1,000 to 1,500sq. ft.) , more manageable gardens, opportunities for one-level living, and flexible designs to accommodate changing household needs.

In this context, there was considerable interest in exploring small-scale infill options, modest ground-oriented dwellings such as coach houses, or two small homes on one lot. This was a frequent topic of interest and discussion at public events and workshops during the Community Dialogue.



2008 Community Dialogue Survey findings:

- Residents indicated support for increasing the supply of duplexes (64%) and townhouses (50%); and for allowing modest-scale infill housing (61%) such as coach houses, and lane houses; and two modest houses on one lot as an alternative to one large house (53%).
- There is less support for more intensive multi-family uses such as apartments (42% for low-rise apartments; 26% for mid-rise, 15% high-rise).
- Differences in support for different housing types varied somewhat by neighbourhood; however, support was generally higher for less intensive housing forms such as ground-oriented units, and lower for more intensive forms such as apartment buildings.
- 62% of residents would like to see more units in the 1,000 to 1,500sq.ft. size range.

Facts and Stats:

- Multi-unit ground-oriented duplexes, suites, and townhomes currently make up the smallest proportion of West Vancouver's housing stock at 13%; whereas single detached homes comprise 58% and apartments comprise 29%.
- Census mobility data indicates that:
 - Multi-family housing plays an important role for older West Vancouver residents relocating within their own community: 70% of people age 65+ who relocated within West Vancouver between 1996-2001, moved into duplexes, townhouses or apartments
 - 79% of people aged 15-34 and 86% of people 55+ who moved to other municipalities, moved into attached multi-unit housing.

RECOMMENDATION # 3.4 **Exploring New Housing Types**

Consider a demonstration program to enable introduction of new housing types on a limited basis, in advance of new housing policies and regulatory tools being formally adopted. This process would enable ideas and concepts for new housing types to be explored through a community planning and design process that would include:

- Study of various housing types and tenures using examples from other communities;
- Community design workshops to explore land use, physical design, and context issues, and provide input for the development of new zoning and design guidelines for infill housing; and
- Possible 'Pilot Projects' - i.e., built examples of new housing types

Discussion

While there is general support for the introduction of new housing types, residents would also like to 'try things out' - i.e., an opportunity to design and test out new concepts for meeting community housing needs, while ensuring 'fit' with established neighbourhood character.

Pilot projects could be used to help develop District policies and zoning for infill housing, and to establish criteria such as: location, context, site conditions, design parameters, etc.

2008 Community Dialogue Survey findings:

- 81% of residents are supportive of pilot projects as a means of demonstrating how new housing forms could be integrated into the community.



RECOMMENDATION # 3.5 **Addressing Housing Affordability**

Develop a strategy to increase the supply of a range of relatively more affordable market and non-market housing alternatives, including:

- Negotiating for smaller units, modest finishes, adaptability/accessibility and rental tenure in a portion of new units in new developments.
- Improving access to affordable rental suites by legalizing secondary suites in single-family houses and by facilitating access to third-party incentive programs such as CMHC's RRAP secondary / garden suite program.
- Working in partnership with housing providers to access senior government funding for affordable non-market housing.
- Working with the development industry to develop an affordable market housing model and possible on-the-ground 'pilot project' - that would look at reducing housing costs through land options, design, construction materials and methods, and size of units.
- Facilitating creation of more affordable housing units (market or non-market) through , for example, the creation of an affordable housing fund, leasing of District-owned lands for housing development, and development of appropriate policies (e.g. protection of rental housing).

Definition of Affordable Housing

The common definition of "affordable housing" is that cost of adequate shelter should not exceed 30% of household income. Housing which costs less than this is considered affordable. In West Vancouver, this definition is most relevant to those households below the median income level. Consumers, housing providers and advocacy organizations also use a broader definition of affordability.

The term "affordable housing" can be used to describe a range of housing alternatives - from homeless shelters and non-market subsidized units for the most vulnerable households, to affordable market options for rent or ownership by households of low to moderate means, such as young families, first time-buyers, and fixed income seniors.

Market options are considered "affordable" relative to the typical cost of housing in the community in which they are located. Households of low to moderate means would have incomes at less than the median for their community.

Increasing the supply at the higher "affordable market" end of the continuum plays an important role in relieving pressure on low cost rental and subsidized housing, and contributes to overall housing diversity in a community

Discussion

Housing affordability was a common issue raised during the Community Dialogue:

- *Older residents are concerned about limited opportunities for downsizing from single-family homes into smaller housing units (apartments, townhouses), in better proximity to community*



services such as health care, shopping, recreation and transit. They would also like to be able to downsize and have some money left over after the sale of their home.

- Younger households are concerned about the inability to enter the housing market due to the high cost of new housing, which is typically designed and built for a more affluent market.

A key OCP policy objective is to “support non-market housing to meet the needs of people with lower incomes; and provide a wider range of housing options to increase relative affordability of market housing.”

Affordable housing contributes to social balance by supporting residents at various life stages, circumstances and economic means. This might include:

- young adults and families, who grew up in the community, moved elsewhere to pursue an education, career or travels, and want to return to raise a family or reconnect with their roots; or
- older residents of modest means who moved to the community many years ago, and want to remain here as they age among family, friends and networks of support; or
- residents experiencing life changes that can dramatically alter housing needs – e.g., career shifts, family separation, changes in income upon retirement, or death of a spouse.

A community that can support residents at different ages and stages of their lives creates an open, welcoming environment with a sense of history, supportive social relationships, and stability.

Living in housing that is adequate and affordable relative to individual circumstances enables people to participate actively and fully in work, recreation, family life and their community.

Although there may be limits to “affordability” in West Vancouver, there are opportunities to increase relative market affordability through a greater mix of housing forms, sizes and tenures. There are also opportunities to partner with senior levels of government and the non-profit sector to create affordable non-market housing.

2008 Community Dialogue Survey findings:

- From a list of five possible new types of housing, residents identified housing for seniors as most needed in the community (71%), followed by housing for young families (54%), and affordable housing (51%).
- 62% feel that more smaller-sized units (1,000 to 1,500 sq.ft.) are needed whereas, only 9% indicate a need for more housing units larger than 2,000 sq.ft. in size.

2007 West Vancouver Community Survey findings:

- “Affordable Housing” ranked as the 4th top issue (out of 19 issues) in the community.
- 81% of residents are concerned about future housing affordability.

Facts and Stats:

- Average house prices in West Vancouver increased 123% in the five-year period 2002-2007; while median household income increased by only 2% over the 2001-2006 census period.



RECOMMENDATION # 3.6 **Utilizing Surplus District-Owned Lands**

Examine opportunities for using surplus District-owned lands to address identified housing gaps in the community, particularly limited housing choice and affordability; and to meet other social, economic, and environmental sustainability objectives.

Discussion

The District can play a leadership role in addressing social objectives, such as meeting the housing needs of a diverse population, through the strategic use of District-owned lands, and its authority over the development approval process.

During the Community Dialogue, the former Horseshoe Bay Firehall site was identified as an opportunity to explore alternative housing options on a site proposed for disposition. Opportunities to address identified housing gaps should be taken into account when considering disposition of any District-owned properties.

Consideration should be given to the use of surplus District-owned lands and sites identified in OCP Policy H3 for consideration of site-specific rezoning and/or OCP amendment, as potential locations for pilot projects.



RECOMMENDATION # 3.7 **Encouraging 'Green' Buildings**

Adopt minimum standards for employing sustainable (green) building design and operating systems, such as recycled building materials, geothermal heating, solar panels, rainwater retention (for irrigation), green roofs (where appropriate), etc.; and introduce incentives for exceeding these standards, where appropriate:

- Examine possible incentives such as priority routing of permits and/or reduction of permit fees for 'green' projects, and grant programs for retrofitting existing properties, including access to senior government funding
- Consider disincentives such as financial penalties for not meeting sustainability or conservation targets in new construction (subject to legal review and practicality of implementation)
- Consider minimum standards for all infill or multi-unit developments
- Examine green building standards for single family development (e.g. City of Vancouver's "Green Homes Program" and Bowen Island's "Green Building Standards"). Other standards which exceed the building code include "Built Green™" and EnerGuide 80 standards.

Discussion

Sustainable building practices and efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions were generally supported by residents during the

Community Dialogue, and are in keeping with the District's sustainability objectives.

On July 14th, 2008, the District ratified the BC Climate Action Charter and demonstrated a commitment to explore initiatives designed to mitigate the effects of climate change. Council also passed a motion "to encourage staff to continue with the exploration of projects designed to mitigate the effects of climate change."

Given the residential nature of West Vancouver, the largest opportunity to explore initiatives for green building technologies and construction practices is in new and retrofitted housing.

2008 Community Dialogue Survey findings:

Residents support the following directions:

- *Regulations or incentives for using 'green building technologies', construction methods, and site management practices during construction (56%)*
- *Pilot projects to demonstrate environmentally sustainable building and landscape design, construction, and operating systems (65%)*



4.0 FUTURE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

Section 4.0 recommendations pertain to neighbourhood features and amenities, and the services needed to enhance quality of life in West Vancouver neighbourhoods. They do not pertain to 'character' issues per se, but are included here to help guide future planning for both established and new neighbourhoods.

RECOMMENDATION # 4.1 Creating 'Village Nodes'

Examine opportunities for creating or enhancing 'village nodes' or neighbourhood service centres through future planning initiatives in both new and established neighbourhoods. This should include:

- Strategies to revitalize and enhance existing small-scale service nodes and commercially-zoned sites (e.g., Cypress Park, Black Cat, Tiddley Cove, Fishermen's Cove);
- An economic analysis to determine what types of small-scale retail and service uses can be supported in a village node, and under what conditions; and
- Requiring 'village node' planning in all new neighbourhoods.

Discussion

Convenient access to 'daily needs' retail and other basic services is what most West Vancouver residents expect; however, such services are lacking in many areas of the community.

Residents support the introduction of new housing types in proximity to existing community services; and would like to see modest-scale retail and other services introduced in other parts of the community – to lessen reliance on the private automobile, encourage social interaction within neighbourhoods, and serve the day-to-day needs of residents. In addition, many West Vancouver residents work from home and would like to see access to support services in their neighbourhoods.

2008 Community Dialogue Survey findings:

- 70% of West Vancouver residents support the concept of modest village centres or nodes being created in areas of the District that currently lack retail and community services.

Facts and Stats:

- 20% of employed West Vancouverites work from home, compared to the regional average of 8%.



RECOMMENDATION # 4.2 Reducing Reliance on the Private Automobile

Make provisions for enhanced pedestrian, cycling, and transit facilities to lessen reliance on the private automobile, enable more sustainable transportation choices, and increase opportunities for community connections. This should be addressed through future community planning, development application reviews, and the planning and design of community facilities.

Discussion

Residents have identified alternative transportation choices as important for enhancing quality of life, helping to link neighbourhoods, and providing more opportunities for social interaction.

The use of community shuttle buses was specifically identified as a way of providing more frequent and cost-effective transit service. Opportunities for 'flag down' pick-up would also be beneficial for seniors and individuals unable to walk to a bus stop, but not necessarily requiring HandiDart services. Any transit changes would, however, require coordination with TransLink.

Residents also identified the need for sidewalks near schools, parks, and other community services, for improved accessibility – particularly for people using wheelchairs, walkers, and strollers, and for improved pedestrian safety.

2008 Community Dialogue Survey findings:

- 69% of residents support enhancement of pedestrian and cycling pathways to better connect neighbours and neighbourhoods as a means of strengthening the sense of community in West Vancouver)
- 74% of residents support the introduction of additional community shuttle buses.



5.0 CONTINUING THE DIALOGUE

RECOMMENDATION # 5.1 Ongoing Public Education and Input

Provide opportunities for ongoing public education, awareness, and input on neighbourhood character and housing issues – and related issues such as heritage conservation, sustainable building design and construction practices, etc.

Discussion

Communications tools such as those used during the Community Dialogue – e.g., online information including links to other web sites, online discussion forum, neighbourhood ideas fair, presentations, surveys and questionnaires have all proven to be very effective in engaging the public.

Two primary objectives would be to educate people about neighbourhood character issues and changing housing needs in the community, and to encourage individuals to consider and plan for their own future housing needs.

Suggested information topics include: sustainable building design and construction practices, adaptable housing, accessible housing, home renovations, access to grants for energy conservation, and municipal regulations and permitting processes, etc.



RECOMMENDATION # 5.2 Developing Pilot Projects

Develop a selection process and evaluation criteria for consideration of possible 'pilot projects' by Council.

Discussion

As part of an overall demonstration program (refer to Recommendations #2.5, #3.4, #3.5 and #2.5), the District will need to establish a selection process and evaluation criteria for Council consideration of any proposed pilot project. Specific criteria should include:

- *Addressing a defined housing gap or neighbourhood character issue, or other District or neighbourhood objectives*
- *Demonstration of local neighbourhood support for the pilot project*
- *Appropriate for the neighbourhood – in terms of type and scale of pilot project*
- *Community involvement program*
- *Providing a longer-term educational opportunity – such as future site tours, etc.*
- *Full documentation of the process and what was learned from the 'pilot' project*
- *Uniqueness of the project (i.e., not a repeat of a previous pilot project) – to ensure the greatest variety of learning opportunities through a series of pilot projects exploring different housing concepts.*

2008 Community Dialogue Survey findings:

- *81% of residents support the possibility of 'pilot projects' as a means of demonstrating how new housing forms could be integrated into the community*
- *70% support the use of pilot projects to encourage 'designing with nature'*
- *50% support the use of pilot projects to examine infill development opportunities, as an incentive for heritage conservation.*

RECOMMENDATION # 5.3

Holding Workshops on Key Topics or Issues

Hold future workshops for West Vancouver residents with experts on various topics that require further exploration – such as affordable housing, sustainable building design, and ‘design with nature’. This will provide an opportunity for ongoing public input and more focussed discussion on key issues.

Discussion

The March 2008 community workshops were highly successful in soliciting public input and direction on neighbourhood character and housing issues, and possible actions to address these during the Community Dialogue. Follow-up workshops would be valuable in exploring key topics in more detail, including:

1. Affordable Housing

More in-depth discussion of housing affordability is needed with key stakeholders including housing advocates, service providers, and developers.

2. Design with Nature

While the concept of ‘designing with nature’ is generally supported, more work is needed to examine site-specific opportunities, and to generate design concepts that meet home owner requirements, and the community’s desire for minimizing alteration of natural site features and values.

Given considerable variation in topography across West Vancouver, a one-size-fits-all approach is neither feasible nor desirable. Rather, it is quite feasible that different ‘design with nature’ concepts may be developed to address unique site conditions.

