

Municipality of North Cowichan

Official Community Plan Advisory Group

AGENDA

Wednesday, February 24, 2021, 5:00 p.m.
Electronically

Pages

1. CALL TO ORDER

This meeting, though electronic, is open to the public and all representations to the Official Community Plan Advisory Group form part of the public record. At this time, due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, public access to Council Chambers is not permitted, however, this meeting may be viewed on the District's live stream webcast at www.northcowichan.ca/meetings.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Recommendation:

That the Official Community Plan Advisory Group approve the agenda as circulated [or as amended].

3. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

3.1. Official Community Plan Advisory Group Minutes

2 - 3

Recommendation:

That the minutes of the OCP Advisory Group meeting held February 10, 2021 be adopted.

4. BUSINESS

4.1. Discussion on Evaluation Criteria and Growth Management Scenarios

4 - 17

4.2. Wrap Up and Next Steps

5. NEW BUSINESS

6. ADJOURNMENT

**Municipality of North Cowichan
Official Community Plan Advisory Group
MINUTES**

**February 10, 2021, 5:00 p.m.
Electronically**

Members Present Cam Campbell
 Chris Crowther
 Bernie Jones
 Mona Kaiser
 Caitlin Kenny
 Rupert Koyote
 Ender McDuff
 Sandy McPherson
 Hajo Meijer
 David Messier
 Nick Neisingh
 Brielle Varasteh
 Shannon Waters

Staff Present Rob Conway, Director, Planning and Building
 Megan Jordan, Manager, Communications and Public Engagement
 Chris Hutton, Community Planning Coordinator
 Mairi Campeau, Community Planner

Consultant Present Rob Barrs, MODUS Planning + Design
 Suzy Lunn, MODUS Planning + Design

1. CALL TO ORDER

There being a quorum present, staff called the meeting to order at 5:02 p.m.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

IT WAS MOVED AND SECONDED:

That the Official Community Plan Advisory Group approve the agenda as circulated.

CARRIED

3. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

IT WAS MOVED AND SECONDED:

That the minutes of the OCP Advisory Group meeting held October 28, 2020 be adopted.

CARRIED

4. BUSINESS

4.1 Chair Nominations and Appointment

Sandy nominated Ender.

Ender accepted nomination.

Ender is appointed as Chair of the OCP Advisory Group.

4.2 Project Schedule Update

Staff provided an update on the project schedule and next steps.

4.3 Presentation on Growth Management Scenarios Approach

Consultant presented on growth scenarios

4.4 Discussion on Evaluation Criteria and Growth Management Scenarios

The Advisory Group asked questions to the consultant and staff and had discussion on their preliminary thoughts on the growth management memo attached to the agenda.

4.5 Discussion about Growth Management Engagement

The Advisory Group discussed engagement for this phase of the OCP.

4.6 Housekeeping, Wrap Up and Next Steps

The Advisory Group was given until February 15, 2021 to send any comments and feedback they had on the growth management memo.

5. NEW BUSINESS

Further requests regarding growth management were identified.

Clarification regarding email communication was sought – the Advisory Group may communicate amongst each other over email, but shall not make any decisions or come to a consensus on any matters related to the OCP Advisory Group.

The Advisory Group may consider a resolution or recommendation at the end of meetings, if deemed necessary.

6. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting ended at 7:17 p.m.

Signed by Chair

Certified by Recording Secretary



MEMO

TO: The OCP Advisory Committee

DATE: February 2, 2021

FROM: Suzy Lunn & Rob Barrs, MODUS Planning,
Design & Engagement

RE: Growth Scenarios Framework and Engagement
Plan

Purpose:

The purpose of this stage of the OCP update is to create growth scenarios for North Cowichan. We will engage Council, the OCP Advisory Committee, Ambassadors and public on where (and in what form) growth should go in the District, and potential impacts and implications of different growth scenarios. To do this, the technical (staff and consultant) team has developed draft growth scenarios, which will be refined with the OCP Advisory Committee and then we will engage the public for their feedback. We will then meet again with the OCP Advisory Committee to get feedback before reporting to Council on the preferred option.

This stage will build on the work completed in Phase 2: Vision, Goals, and Community Character. A draft goal from the Vision + Goals Report will help frame this stage of the process:

Focus growth and development in established centres to strengthen our vibrant communities while maintaining individual character. Using innovation and best practices to foster liveable, compact communities will preserve natural and rural areas and encourage climate-friendly and active ways to move around. Growth and development will occur in a low-impact, site adapted manner integrating natural features and ecological systems.

Attachment 1: Gap Analysis on Growth Management provides additional policy context and guidance.

Objectives for OCP Advisory Committee:

At the meeting we wish to discuss and receive feedback on:

- the growth scenario options and approach,
- the evaluation criteria, and
- public engagement plan.

Background:

What do we mean by growth?

Many communities in BC, including North Cowichan, are experiencing population growth that results from immigration to Canada and migration from other Canadian communities/regions. As with most BC communities, North Cowichan is not seeing any natural increase (more births than deaths). The growth in population results in increased demand for housing and services and the need for employment for these people. Increased demand for residential development also arises from a change in household size (households are getting smaller so more units are required for the same population) as well as demand for recreational and commercial properties.

When we use the term “growth”, we are usually referring to a combination of increased population and increased development (residential and employment-related) that accompanies it. When discussing OCP policy and growth management, it is worth differentiating the type of growth we are referring to. According to the [Rennie Intelligence Long-Range Projections of Population, Housing, and Employment in the Cowichan Valley Regional District Report](#), North Cowichan might expect its population to increase from 29,913 to 38,612 by 2050, an increase of 8,699 people. Housing units are projected to increase from 12,820 in 2017 to 16,519 in 2050 (an increase of 3,699), and jobs from 11,310 to 14,542 (an increase of 3,232) over the same time period¹. The growth scenarios will examine options for where these new housing units and jobs could be located and the implication of these scenarios.

Growth management is the practice of planning for and controlling the location, density and type of land use and development in a community. The idea is that by managing where growth occurs, we can increase the public benefits arising from growth and also mitigate the negative impacts of growth on health, asset management costs and the environment.

Depending on how it is shaped and managed, growth can have positive or negative impacts on things the community values. Growth has typically been seen as positive for economic development and the accompanying social benefits (more jobs, amenities, local taxes etc.) and as negative for the environment and community character. However, over the last decade or so, several studies have indicated how certain types/patterns of growth can have a negative impact on the fiscal health of a community if not managed properly. Additionally, growth can actually lead to positive environmental outcomes if used to leverage restoration/ protection of environmental resources.

Due to the potentially large positive and negative outcomes resulting from growth, OCPs typically place a lot of emphasis on how growth is managed. Successfully managing growth depends on setting clear objectives and using policy to strategically manage the type, mix, density and location of growth that occurs and the requirements, amenities and benefits that accompany it. Growth management is challenging because the community may have very different priorities and values when it comes to the perceived costs and benefits of growth.

How Important is Growth Management to the OCP?

Growth management is one of the fundamental topics of an OCP and is highly related to other community planning topics, including housing, social development, mobility, diversity and

¹ These numbers will be updated, if necessary, with the CVRD Housing Needs Assessment data when it is available.

inclusivity, climate change, environmental protection, community core vitality, economic development, maintaining rural areas, and more.

Growth Scenario Planning

Growth scenario planning is a technique that examines different growth options and the evaluation of impacts and benefits of each.

The main questions to be examined are:

1. Where should residential and employment growth go?
2. What type and density of growth is assumed? Ex. what is the proportion of single-detached, townhouse and apartment dwellings (rental, non-market, fee simple).
3. How much land is allocated for various land uses?
4. How do the scenarios align with the evaluation criteria?

How Will the Scenarios be Developed?

The technical team has created draft scenarios and discussed and refined them with Council. The draft scenarios will be refined with the OCP Advisory Committee and further evaluation of the criteria will follow public engagement. Following public engagement, we will workshop results and seek recommendations on an acceptable working growth pattern with the OCP Advisory Committee, and Council. This new growth scenario will inform the development of growth management and land use designations policy in the new OCP.

It is important to remember that the draft scenarios are, by necessity, a simplification of reality. This is necessary to keep the scenarios relatively straightforward and understandable. However, by providing some relatively simple scenarios, we can inform a rich community discussion about the pros and cons of different choices, and thereby develop sound growth management policy in the new OCP.

Proposed Growth Scenario Options

We propose discussing and refining the following growth scenario options with the OCP Advisory Committee.

Option 1: Business as Usual – growth follows the existing OCP (i.e. the present Urban Containment Boundary) and Zoning Bylaw and a similar density and pattern to what has occurred in the last 20 years.

Considerations

We have provided some preliminary considerations below. Further analysis will occur over the coming weeks. Once a preferred option has been identified continued technical analysis will occur.

Where will growth go?

- Growth is dispersed at a lower density throughout North Cowichan.

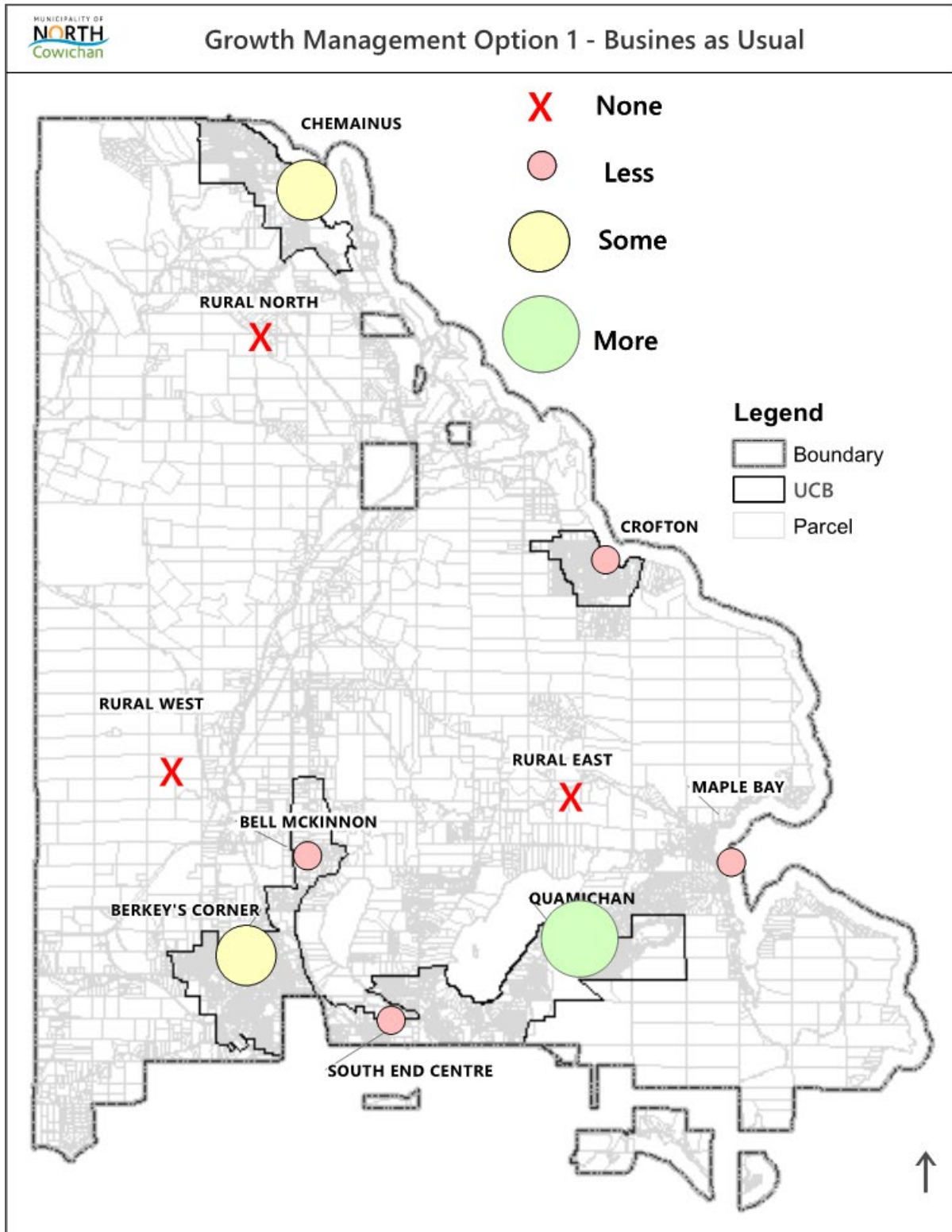
What type of units and where?

- The majority of new housing units may be single family homes.

Water and Sewer Systems?

- The South End, Chemainus and Crofton are connected to the municipal water system and have adequate capacity. The biggest consideration is fire flow demands for water if density increases.
- The South End, Chemainus and Crofton are connected to the municipal sewer system and have adequate capacity. Some upgrade may be needed in older neighbourhoods.

Option 1 Map: Business as Usual



Option 2: Focused Growth – restrain growth to three core areas (South End, Chemainus and Crofton) and update these growth areas boundaries. Densities are higher than the BAU scenario.

Considerations

We have provided some preliminary considerations below. Further analysis will occur over the coming weeks. Once a preferred option has been identified continued technical analysis will occur.

Where will growth go?

- Majority of new residential and employment growth in ‘South End’ UCB, including South End Centre/ University Village, Berkey’s Corner, Bell McKinnon and Quamichan. The growth areas boundaries for these communities are still to be determined.
- Some new growth in Crofton
- Some new growth in Chemainus

What type of units will be built and where?

- Due to increased density, we anticipate a higher percentage of units will be multi-family (duplexes, townhomes, apartments) versus single family.
- Units will be focussed around commercial nodes.

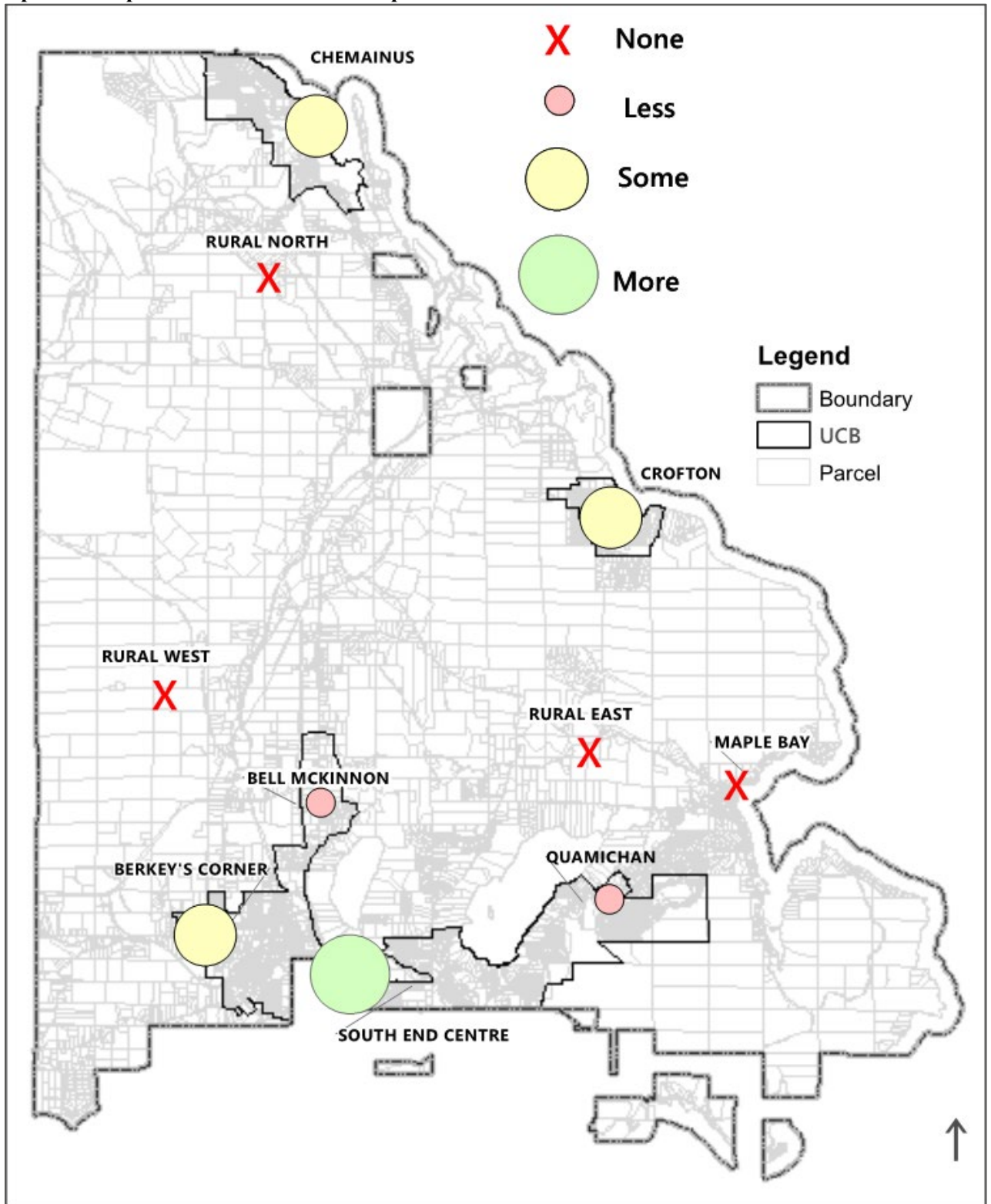
Implementation?

- Zoning Bylaw would need to be updated to align with OCP designations however CD Zones in Quamichan will remain in place.
- Consideration needs to be given the Bell McKinnon Local Area Plan.

Water and Sewer Capacity?

- The South End, Chemainus and Crofton are connected to the municipal water system and have adequate capacity. The biggest consideration is fire flow demands for water if density increases.
- The South End, Chemainus and Crofton are connected to the municipal sewer system and have adequate capacity. Some upgrades may be needed in older neighbourhoods. Sewage treatment capacity is adequate for all three systems; however depending on density of growth the expected life of these facilities may end sooner.

Option 2 Map: Focussed Growth with Updated Growth Boundaries



Option 3: Multi-Centre Growth – distribute growth amongst seven urban communities (South End Centre/ University Village, Bell-McKinnon, Quamichan, Berkey’s Corner, Chemainus, Crofton, Maple Bay), within the context of regional and local housing demand, neighbour node principles, and individual community character, values and constraints.

Considerations

We have provided some preliminary considerations below. Further analysis will occur over the coming weeks. Once a preferred option has been identified continued technical analysis will occur.

Where will growth go?

- Majority of new residential and employment growth in ‘South End’ UCB, including Berkey’s Corner, Bell McKinnon and Quamichan
- Some of new growth in Crofton
- Some of new growth in Chemainus
- Less growth in Maple Bay

What type of units will be built and where?

- Due to increased density we anticipate a higher percentage of units will be multi-family (duplexes, townhomes, apartments) versus single family
- Units will be focussed around commercial nodes

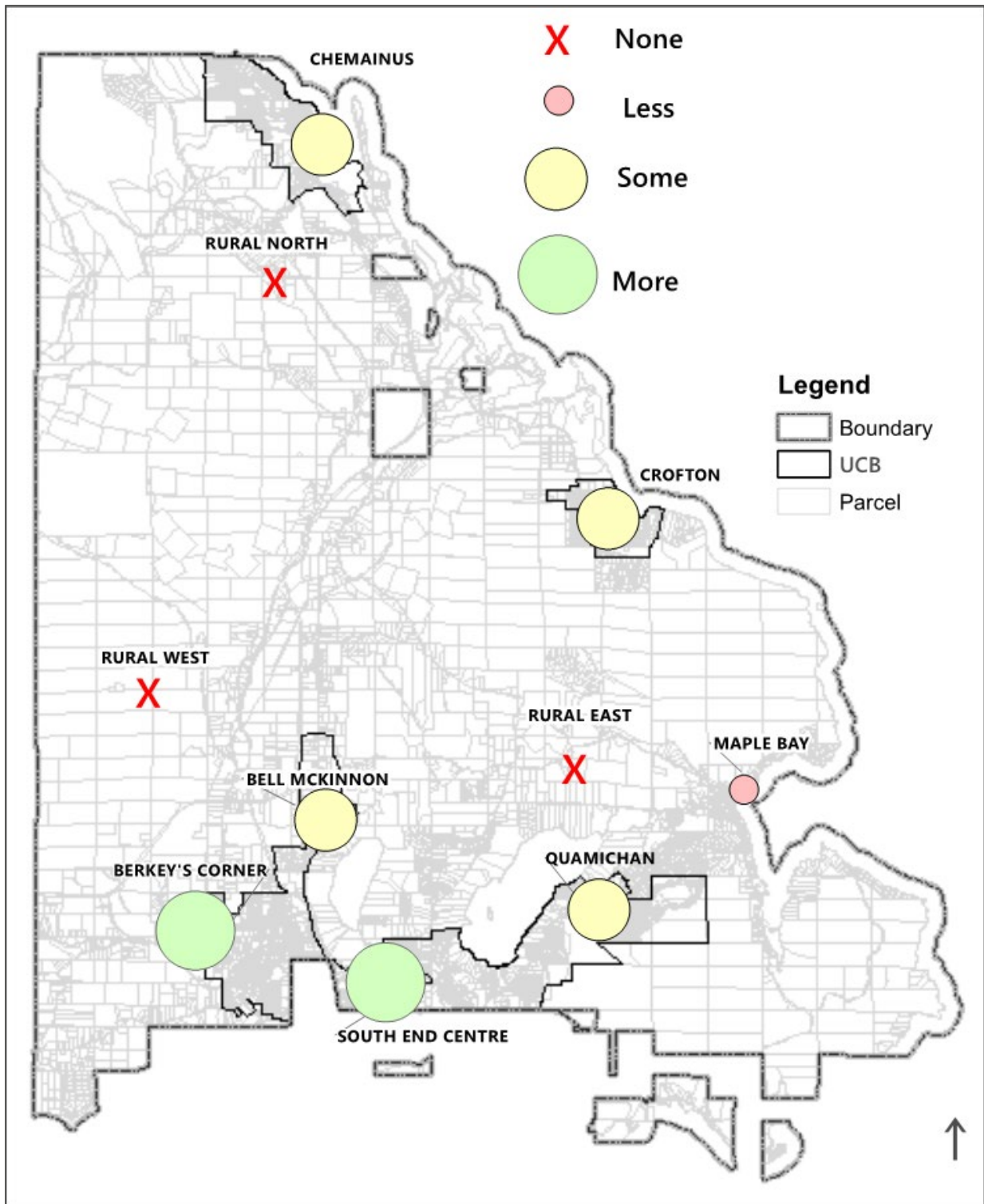
Implementation?

- Zoning Bylaw would need to be updated to align with OCP designations however CD Zones in Quamichan will remain
- Consideration needs to be given to the Bell McKinnon Plan

Water and Sewer Capacity?

- The South End, Chemainus and Crofton are connected to the municipal water system and have adequate capacity. the biggest consideration is fire flow demands for water if density increases.
- The South End, Chemainus and Crofton are connected to the municipal sewer system and have adequate capacity. Some upgrade may be needed in older neighbourhoods.
- Maple Bay is not connected to municipal sewer systems. Most homes are connected to the municipal water system.

Option 3 Map: Multi-Centre Growth



Evaluation Criteria

When evaluating growth scenarios, it is important to identify which criteria to use. These ‘evaluation criteria’ should generally align with the goals and principles already established during the vision and goals stage of the OCP update and will need to have data available in order to measure them

We propose that each option will be evaluated based on:

- **Environment** i.e., how much land is lost? What is the likely impact to sensitive environmental systems and local biodiversity?
- **Climate change** - what is the impact on greenhouse gas emissions related to transportation and building energy. What are the risks posed by increased flooding, wildfire, steep slopes hazard etc.?
- **Agriculture & Food Security** – what are the implications for local food and agricultural systems?
- **Transportation** – how will each scenario affect mode choice and traffic volumes and patterns?
- **Health and livability**- how will each scenario affect the choice to use active modes of transportation, allow social connections, access to community amenities and services and access to natural areas?
- **Equity and social justice** – how will these scenarios affect residents differently, and how do they affect accessibility in the built environment?
- **Asset management and impact on infrastructure** – how does each scenario affect future cost of municipal infrastructure?
- **Affordability and diversity of housing forms** - how does each scenario affect the availability and affordability of housing along the housing spectrum and cost of transportation? Rental, affordable non-market housing, affordable housing for families, housing for vulnerable populations, workforce housing?
- **Economic development and jobs** – what is the likely impact of each scenario on creating sustainable, local job opportunities?
- **Community character** – how does each scenario impact the character of the community? What is the impact to rural character and setting?

The evaluations will be supplemented by available data where available from geospatial analysis, the Climate Action and Energy Plan, the Housing Needs Assessment, the recent survey and dialogues on community character and other existing plans and studies. Some criteria will figure more prominently in the engagement sessions, where public input and local knowledge can enhance technical analysis.

Public Engagement

Once feedback is received from the OCP Advisory Committee and the preliminary evaluation is complete we will engage the public. This will include an online survey (simple survey and/ or Placespeak) for the public to rate the options and four open houses hosted over Zoom. We are looking for volunteers to help with the facilitation of these events. Promotion and outreach will include:

- Website updates
- Social Media posts
- Email Blasts
- Word of Mouth

Timelines:

- January 26: Presentation to Council on Growth Scenario Framework (MODUS & North Cowichan)
- February 10: Workshop with OCP Advisory Committee to discuss scenarios (MODUS & North Cowichan)
- March: Launch Growth Management Engagement (over two weeks)
- April – Vetting and Review of Engagement Results and Draft Policy
- Late April: Meeting with the OCP Advisory Committee to review results (MODUS & North Cowichan)
- May: Meeting with Council to review results (MODUS & North Cowichan)

Attachment 1: Gap Analysis on Growth Management

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES IN ADDRESSING THIS THEMATIC OBJECTIVE?

There are a number of challenges in addressing growth management in North Cowichan:

Concentrating growth to create complete, walkable communities: Concentrating growth can contribute to the creation walkable, diverse, and mixed-use communities. Until vehicles are fully electrified it can also reduce GHG emissions associated with transportation. Several of the older villages such as Chemainus, Crofton and Maple Bay have compact and well-defined centres. However, recent development is more car-oriented, disconnected (from an active transportation perspective), and is spread across North Cowichan with low density and poor walkability. This recent growth is not connected to a well understood, logical framework that can guide where and how growth occurs.

Protecting agricultural areas and the Municipal Forest: Concentrating growth in specific areas also helps to protect agricultural areas and the Municipal Forest from development that is unwanted. This has often been a challenge across British Columbia due to growth pressures and resource lands often seen as a development land bank. However, North Cowichan appears to have been largely successful in protecting its resource lands due to land preservation policies and the value placed on the Municipal Forest and agricultural land.

Supporting commercial: While commercial nodes are wanted in some residential areas in order to increase walkability and livability, and decrease transportation distance travelled, it is often difficult to make these financially feasible to develop or operate. As an example, Maple Bay Heights has commercial area designated but this site has not been developed for commercial uses. On-line shopping and the Covid-19 pandemic have made the viability of small commercial nodes even more tenuous. However, North Cowichan should look for opportunities to create/ support 'third spaces' (where people can informally meet and gather) whether or not these are associated with commercial activity.

Housing diversity and affordability: Creating housing affordability and choice are challenges for municipalities across British Columbia including North Cowichan. Land and housing prices have been driven by several factors including immigration, demand for recreational, speculative investment, lack of supply, and new forms of short-term rental (AirBnB etc.). Housing choice and diversity is hampered by the perception and sometimes the reality that higher density forms of housing are less desirable and less profitable for developers.

Lack of purpose-built rental housing - The bulk of the purpose-built rental unit supply was built prior to 1979 (65%). There is also limited supply of purpose-built rental bachelor units (5% of all units) and 3 bedroom units (7% of all units). There was historically low vacancy in 2019 across all rental unit types, particularly in bachelor units (0% vacancy).

Lack of Build Out Estimates for Local Area Plans - A review of the Bell McKinnon, University Village and other local area plans shows that there are no residential supply or unit capacity estimates in

the plans. In addition, estimated growth or absorption by community has not yet been determined. This makes it difficult to forecast build-out, which can make infrastructure, servicing and community development initiatives difficult. Directions to adopt build-out scenarios for each of the local area plans is recommended for the 2020 OCP.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO CONSIDER

Development of Growth Management Options: Once the new OCP vision and goals have been identified, the consulting team will create a number of alternative growth management options. These options will build upon the options created and modelled as part of the Climate Action and Energy Plan. They will show alternative locations for future growth of the community. Each of the options will be evaluated against community objectives to understand the pros and cons. These options (and accompanying evaluation) should form an important part of the community consultation process.

Clarify community values and objectives related to growth: Environmental, economic, social and cultural values along with market, technical and demographic information, must all be considered during the development of North Cowichan's growth management policy. As growth management is related to so many of North Cowichan's other goals, it is important to help the community clarify its values and objectives and understand the range of options for how future growth can be accommodated.

Create a comprehensive and clear structure plan: While the existing Urban Containment Boundary and Land Use Designation Map is a good start, North Cowichan lacks a clear land use framework with which to make consistent land use and development decisions. Some of the current development pattern therefore lacks a clear structure and clear transitions between areas. The OCP would benefit from more clarity through a Structure Plan and land use framework with a simplified and refined set of land use designations. This could potentially be. Based on 'development transect such as the one MODUS created for the Cowichan Valley Regional District, which includes the categories resource and natural, rural and agricultural, suburban, village, urban, and special district. This framework clarifies the defining character of each area, the desired the land uses and the implementing zones in each.

Review the Urban Containment Boundary: Through the OCP update process, the long-term vision and principles of the OCP, and the objectives and policy of the other sections will be updated. The Urban Containment Boundary, and proposed Structure Plan and land use framework will all need to be reviewed so that they more clearly reflect these updated vision and values of the OCP. This will likely mean the concentration of growth into mixed-use hubs in order to improve walkability and reduce impacts on the environment and resource lands.

Integrate Local Area Plans into OCP: The existing Local Area Plans (for Bell-McKinnon, University Village, and Crofton) could be integrated into the OCP (as Schedules), including the Urban Containment Boundary, and proposed Structure Plan and land use framework. Policies should be reviewed for consistency and redundancy.

Modify Growth Management Policies to create greater clarity of intent: Several policies in the 'Build Strong Communities' section should be re-worded for greater clarity so that all users (community members, landowners/developers, Council and staff) have a clear idea of what the intent is and where development of different types is and is not permitted. For example, Policy 2.5.1.1. currently states: "The municipality will manage growth through the establishment of a firm urban containment boundary. This should be revised to 'urban development will not be supported outside the urban containment boundary.'"

Increase opportunities for higher density development: While North Cowichan has seen a recent uptick in the number of apartment dwellings built, the OCP should encourage additional forms of higher density development across a range of unit types to ensure a diversity of housing for a range of life stages and incomes.

Develop build-out scenarios for local area plans: To better manage growth and coordinate infrastructure and community amenities delivery, North Cowichan should estimate the unit capacity in each LAP and Comprehensive Plan to better understand the potential impacts on infrastructure as well as availability to increase supply of housing if needed.

Strengthen Affordable Housing Policies: Affordable housing policies should be strengthened in the OCP update, with particular attention paid to the economics of developing these projects. Affordable housing projects are very costly to build - and the high cost must be offset by a significant share of private sector units in the building, or land and equity subsidies. The first step is defining rents or prices which constitute affordable housing. This gives clarity to developers or non-profit organizations about the investment required to undertake these projects. It is also recommended that the municipality engage a partner to test a potential affordable housing project on a select site in the municipality to understand the zoning and financial requirements of a standard project. Further clarity should come from the CVRD Housing Needs Analysis work currently underway.

Explore further development of Purpose-Built Rental Housing: Policies which support the development of purpose-built rental projects are recommended for the updated OCP. This could include directions to study the density and zoning necessary to make these projects financially viable. Since there has been a recent increase in the development of purpose-built rental units (2017 to 2019), an analysis of these projects and the underlying success factors is recommended.

Tracking Housing Data: Separating out secondary suites and purpose-built apartment/townhouse projects in building permit data is recommended, as each unit types requires different policies to support development.