



## **DONNAY DRIVE LANDS LOCAL AREA SERVICE**

### WHAT WE HEARD REPORT

November 3, 2025



*This report summarizes the communications and engagement undertaken in support of the Donnay Drive Lands Local Area Service proposal.*

*Ultimately, the number of petitions received in opposition will inform the recommendation brought forward to Council for a decision.*

## **Background**

North Cowichan proposed a Local Area Service funding model to acquire two parcels of forested land adjacent to Donnay Drive totaling 3.66 hectares (9.6 acres) for \$1.163 million. These lands have long been used informally by residents as park space and were listed for sale by Vancouver Island Providence Community Association in fall 2024.

The community expressed strong interest in preserving this green space, which was heard through emails to Council, as well as stories and letters in the local newspaper. A community delegation appeared before Council on March 11, 2025 requesting that North Cowichan purchase the land.

Council directed staff to investigate options to support the community request, without impacting property taxpayers in all parts of North Cowichan. As there was no strategic direction to acquire parkland in this area, funding this through reserve funding was not an option. Options investigated included not-for-profit or land trust acquisition, which were not further explored due to the lengthy timelines required for these types of organizations to raise funds to acquire land.

Using a Local Area Service model was decided, which would provide funding outside of the municipal land sale reserve, would preserve the land as park space, and the land and its use met requirements set out in the Community Charter that outline types of local services that can be funded through this mechanism (recreation facilities or public park space are included).

North Cowichan entered into a conditional sales agreement with the seller, pending the outcome of the Local Area Service petition process. The agreement expires in December 2025.

For this Local Area Service (LAS) the 662 property owners within the defined LAS boundary of an approximate 800 metre (“10-minute walk”) distance to the land would contribute financially via annual property tax charges over 20 years.

Property owners within the LAS who do not support the land acquisition were invited to submit a petition within the petition period indicating they are not in support.

The petition period was open from October 1 to 31, 2025, exceeding the legislative requirement of at least 30 days.

## **What we did**

A communication and engagement plan was developed that included the following objectives:

- To inform property owners within the LAS boundary about the proposal, the potential financial impact, how a Local Area Service petition works, and how to submit a petition if they were opposed.
- Provide ample opportunities for residents to ask questions and be provided with answers.

A project page was launched at [ConnectNorthCowichan.ca/donnay-lands](https://ConnectNorthCowichan.ca/donnay-lands) containing information about the proposal, background documents and materials, a map and list of addresses, staff contact information, and a Q&A forum.

## Donnay Drive Lands Acquisition Local Area Service

North Cowichan is proposing to acquire two parcels of forested land adjacent to Donnay Drive that have long been used informally by residents as park space.

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North Cowichan is proposing to acquire two parcels of forested land adjacent to Donnay Drive totaling 3.66 hectares (9.6 acres) for \$1.163 million, that have long been used informally by residents as park space. These lands, currently owned by Vancouver Island Providence Community Association (who also own and operate Providence Farm), are now listed for sale. The community has expressed strong interest in preserving this green space. A community delegation appeared before Council in March requesting that North Cowichan purchase the land.

- Watch the "Neighbours of Providence Farm" [delegation to Council](#), (March 11, 2025)

If acquired, the land and trail networks would be preserved. The acquisition would be funded through a **Local Area Service (LAS)**, meaning only property owners within the defined LAS boundary would contribute financially via annual property tax charges over 20 years.

### Contact us

Have questions or want to learn more about this project, contact us below:

Name Tricia Mayea, Corporate Officer

Phone 250-746-3100

Email [legislativeservices@northcowichan.ca](mailto:legislativeservices@northcowichan.ca)

In writing 7030 Trans-Canada Highway

*A screenshot of the Connect North Cowichan project page*

## How we connected

Communication was informed through statutory requirements outlined in the *Community Charter*. Several additional means to connect with residents were undertaken to ensure people within the Local Area Service boundary were aware of the process, and people outside the boundary knew the process was underway and what it entailed.

Notice was given in accordance with [Section 94](#) of the *Community Charter* by posting notice to social media and the Public Notice Posting Places (website and notice board) at Municipal Hall on September 24, 2025, and published in the Cowichan Valley Citizen on October 1, 2025

Notice was also given in accordance with [Section 213\(3\)](#) of the *Community Charter* by mailing to the affected property owners on the morning of September 25, 2025.

**Information package delivery:** A hitch in the notification process happened on September 25, 2025 when Canada Post employees announced an immediate labour walkout. This happened only a few hours after addressed and stamped information packages to all property owners were delivered to the post office. In order to maintain the timeline and October 1 to 31 2025 petition period, property owners needed to receive this information before October 1. Legislative Services staff reprinted the notices and hand delivered them to the 662 properties on Monday, September 29. Property owners with different mailing addresses received their notices by courier.

### Other ways we connected:

- [ConnectNorthCowichan.ca/Donnay-lands](https://connectnorthcowichan.ca/Donnay-lands) project page
- News release to media outlets (September 25, 2025)
- Social media posts:
  - September 19, 2025  
(reach: 8,625; reactions: 63; comments: 9; shares: 5; clicks: 661)
  - September 24, 2025 (legislative notice)  
(reach: 2,099; reactions: 19; comments: 0; shares: 4; clicks: 227)
  - October 27, 2025 (deadline reminder)  
(reach: 2,796; reactions: 10; comments: 3; shares: 9; clicks: 471)

*The September 25 post on Facebook*

Municipality of North Cowichan  
September 19 at 11:10 AM

North Cowichan and Vancouver Island Providence Community Association have reached an agreement in principle for the sale of two vacant properties near Donnay Drive. The two lots, totalling 3.86 hectares (9.6 acres), are proposed to be purchased by North Cowichan for \$1.163 million for the purposes of nature conservation and the development and preservation of a trail network.

The proposal follows the efforts of several nearby residents who petitioned Council to have the municipality purchase the land.

The acquisition is contingent on the approval of a Local Area Service (LAS), a funding mechanism outlined in B.C.'s Community Charter. Under this model, the cost of the land purchase would be borne by property owners within a defined distance of the properties. A total of 662 properties have been identified as the most likely to benefit from the new nature space as they are within a 10-minute walk of the land.

The LAS process assumes that the acquisition of the land will proceed unless 50% of the 662 property owners oppose the initiative through a formal petition.

View maps, FAQs, and learn more at [connectnorthcowichan.ca/donnay-lands](https://connectnorthcowichan.ca/donnay-lands)



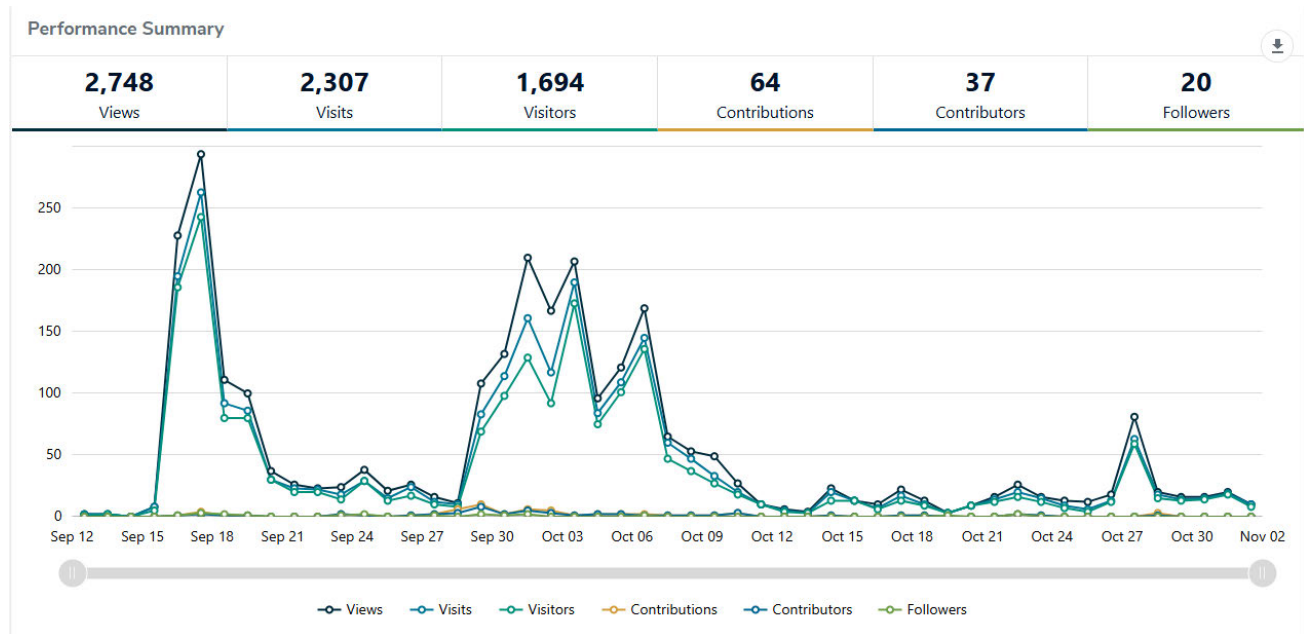
Municipality of North Cowichan

- All properties within the LAS will receive a formal information package in the mail.
- The petition period runs Oct 1 - Oct 31 (completed petitions must be received by 4pm on Oct 31).

The Connect North Cowichan page received more than 2,300 visits by nearly 1,700 unique visitors, with 59 questions posed by 37 contributors.

The conversation tool available on the Connect platform was initially activated with the hope residents would use the forum-style space to have discussions amongst themselves

regarding the land, ideas for future improvements (or not), etc. however staff found contributors were mis-using this space to repeat their questions already posted to the Q+A. The conversation tool was turned off on October 3.



## What we heard

The 59 questions posed to the Q&A on the Connect page can be summarized into five general themes:

- **Equity and fairness of the LAS:** Many questioned why only 662 properties were being asked to pay for a public amenity, raising concerns about affordability, especially for seniors and fixed-income households.
- **Process transparency:** Residents expressed frustration with the petition process, particularly that only those opposed needed to act, and that the process felt rushed or unclear.
- **Park use and access:** Questions asked whether the park would be public or private, and whether improvements like parking or trail upgrades were planned.

- **Property valuation:** Several asked how the \$1.163 million purchase price was determined and whether the land was worth that amount.
- **Acquisition alternatives and precedent:** Some asked why other funding models or land options weren't considered, and whether LAS had been used for parks before.

The tone of the questions was often skeptical, concerned, and at times frustrated. Many residents sought clarity and reassurance about the financial and procedural aspects of the proposal.

A high volume of emails was received through Legislative Services, Council, North Cowichan's general mailbox, and the Connect North Cowichan email. Many people requested clarification on the process or next steps, while most expressed opinions—such as support or opposition—without posing specific questions.

During the petition period, numerous residents visited municipal hall to pick up or drop off petitions. A high percentage of the interactions were negative, and in the first two weeks, front counter and Legislative Services staff experienced 3 – 5 aggressive interactions per day, including verbal assaults, which were likely misdirected anger toward the process.

## Who we heard from

Most, if not all, participants on the Connect digital engagement page were from within the Local Area Service boundaries.

## Next steps

This report will accompany a report to Council outlining the petition results and a recommendation for Council decision.