Community Parks and Trails Strategy
Electoral Area H

ENGAGEMENT #2 SUMMARY:
Survey and Open House

Introduction
Public engagement is integral to the development of the Community Parks and Trails Strategy (CPTS). Overall, the process consists of an Advisory Committee of community representatives and two public Open Houses with corresponding online surveys. The following provides a summary of the second Open House and survey.

Executive Summary
The draft Vision statement was accepted as presented “A vibrant community where residents can easily access Community Parks, beaches, services, and destinations using a system of inter-connected trails for recreation, social interaction and nature appreciation”.

With regards to the supply and distribution of Neighbourhood parkland, the spatial analysis on the Concept Plan shows a gap in service in the area between Oakdowne and the Big Qualicum River. This area is fairly rural with a relatively low population so there is no immediate need for acquiring additional parkland unless an opportunity arises in this area over the next ten years.

Water access is a high priority for Electoral Area H residents. At present the RDN manages ten water access sites through permitting with the province. The 2000 RDN inventory and description of water access sites was updated by the POSAC this year. This analysis suggests there is another eight sites that are worthy of consideration and another four sites that need further analysis. Many of these potential sites only require minor improvements such as signage and benches and three sites could potentially be upgraded for cartop boat launching.

Developing new Community trails that connect pedestrians and bicycle users with community destinations is also a high priority. The proposed Community trails network shown on the Concept Plan provides a blueprint for achieving this. This will take time and can only be achieved incrementally so it is important to view the final Concept Plan as a working document and that it be integrated into the Official Community Plan.

Electoral Area H residents have access to many existing informal trails mostly located on forested Crown Land. The RDN can play a role either by entering into new management agreements with the province or by educating and supporting community interest groups, who can also enter into agreements with the province. Community-based trail management has been successful in other Electoral Areas in the RDN.

Overview of Input Received
Both the Survey and Open House addressed similar content. Input was sought on: the draft Vision statement; adequacy of the Neighborhood Parks supply and distribution; completeness of the proposed Community Trail network; and priorities for future action.

Four people attended the second Open House, held on June 5th from 5:00 – 7:30pm at the Lighthouse Community Center. The survey was available at the Open House in hard copy, however, no completed
surveys were returned at the Open House or online. The online survey was available from June 5\textsuperscript{th} to July 5\textsuperscript{th}.

**Vision**

The proposed draft Vision statement was developed using key words chosen by residents in Survey #1. There were no comments regarding the Vision statement so it is accepted as is: “A vibrant community where residents can easily access Community Parks, beaches, services, and destinations using a system of inter-connected trails for recreation, social interaction and nature appreciation”.

**Adequacy of existing Neighbourhood Parks supply**

The existing Community parkland was classified into one of five categories and these were shown on panels at the Open House. The Concept Plan showed the distribution of the various park types including Neighbourhood Parks that are used for active recreation and generally serve an area within a 1km radius. This spatial analysis showed that Electoral Area H is well served by existing community parkland except for an area that is devoid of Neighbourhood Park between the Big Qualicum River and Oakdowne. This area is fairly sparsely populated so there is no impending demand for additional parkland at this time unless an opportunity arises with a proposed development application.

**Completeness of the proposed Community Trail system**

A Concept Plan was available at the Open House that showed a proposed Community Trail network that was based on feedback in Open House #1 for an inter-connected trail system that connects residents to park, trail, beach and commercial destinations. The Bowser area is constrained by two significant barriers to pedestrian and bicycle use, namely the E & N railway and the Island highway. Safe crossing requires approvals from outside agencies and the standards can result in significant costs. Shared use of the Island Highway with vehicles presents both safety and quality of experience issues. While it is best to avoid major roads for recreational trails, if they are used it is best to physically separate the trail users from the vehicles with a barrier curb, landscaping, or other similar engineering treatment. The proposed Community trail network includes one section of shared use with the Island Highway between Jamieson Road the Legion.

The proposed Community trail route is also integrated with the proposed Regional trail system. Some trail sections overlap thereby reducing redundancy and cost. Feedback from the Open House and POSAC members was generally supportive of the proposed Community trail network as a guide to future trail planning and construction.

**Short, Medium and Long-Term Priorities**

It was clear from the first Open House and Survey that trails and water access sites are the priorities in Electoral Area H. Electoral Area H residents have access to many existing informal trails mostly located on forested Crown Land. Protection and improvements to these trail resources are a priority for many residents. The RDN does not have formal management agreements with the province for most of these lands. The RDN can play a role either by entering into agreements with the province or by educating and supporting community interest groups, who are also eligible to enter into trail management agreements with the province. This community-based model is working successfully in other Electoral Areas in the RDN.
Developing new Community trails that connect pedestrians and bicycle users with community destinations is also a high priority. The proposed Community trails network shown on the Concept Plan provides a blueprint for achieving this. This will take time and can only be achieved incrementally so it is important to view the final Concept Plan as a working document and that it be integrated into the Official Community Plan.

With regards to water access sites, Electoral Area H residents and visitors have the potential to use numerous public water access points to the Strait of Georgia. These undeveloped Road Rights of Way are under provincial jurisdiction. At present, the RDN manages ten sites and the results of the public process suggest that the RDN should consider managing additional sites. The 2000 RDN inventory and description of water access sites was updated by the POSAC this year. This analysis suggests there is another eight sites that are worthy of consideration and another four sites need further analysis. Many of these potential sites only require minor improvements such as signage and benches and three sites could potentially be upgraded for cartop boat launching.

There were many other park improvements suggested other than trails during the process. Benches, portapotties, and picnic tables were seen as highly desirable as the budget allows.