



STAFF REPORT

Date: August 7, 2014

File No.: 6500-20- Age and
Disability Friendly
Community Planning

To: North Pender Island Local Trust Committee
For the meeting of August 28, 2014

From: Justine Starke, Island Planner

CC: Robert Kojima, Regional Planning Manager

Re: Age and Disability Friendly Community Planning

Preliminary Report

The North Pender Island Local Trust Committee (LTC) has identified Age and Disability Friendly Community Planning as a top priority on the work program. The purpose of this report is to provide some background on the subject matter, and to introduce a process and recommend a scope of work. A draft project charter that establishes the objectives, scope, and timeline of the project has been prepared and is attached to this report.

Project Objectives

The objective of this project is to consider how the North Pender Island Local Trust Committee can improve accessibility and inclusion for aging and mobility challenged community members and people with disabilities.

Project Background

People with Disabilities

UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was adopted on December 13, 2006. The *UN Convention* is built on the recognition that the inherent dignity, worth and equal human rights of all people are a basic foundation for freedomⁱ. The *UN Convention* recognizes that “disability is an evolving concept and that disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.”ⁱⁱⁱ It calls for state bodies to ensure persons with disabilities

“have access to a range of in-home residential and other community support services, including personal assistance necessary to support living and inclusion in the community, and to prevent isolation and segregation from the community.”ⁱⁱⁱ

The Province of BC has supported Canada’s ratification of the *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* through commitments made in “Accessibility 2024: Making BC the most progressive province in Canada for people with disabilities by 2024.” One of BC’s goals is to have “the most accessible building code and the most declared accessible communities in Canada by 2024.” The province will measure its success by “the number of BC communities incorporating accessibility strategies in their Official Community Plans and by the percentage of publicly owned and leased facilities that are accessible.”^{iv}

Canada’s Aging Seniors

The seniors’ population in Canada is comprised of three age groups (65-74, 75-84, and 85+). Among these, those aged 85 and older are considered the “very old;” this cohort will increase in the coming few decades and will be followed by the oldest of the baby boom cohorts (those born 1946-55) who, by the year 2031, will begin to reach age 85. According to Gerald Hodge, in the *Geography of Aging: Preparing Communities for the Surge in Seniors* (2008):

The baby boom bulge will increase the absolute and relative number of older people at all geographic levels in Canada. The increase will happen gradually and will occur along with the continued aging of earlier cohorts. . . There are two essential questions to ask in response to this phenomenon: *What difference will this increase in seniors’ numbers make to the communities in which they live and to their functioning? And will communities be prepared to offer environments that enable seniors to achieve independence?*^v

The physical environment is critical to enabling the independence of seniors and people with disabilities and determines the extent to which people can enjoy autonomy throughout their day. The “form, content, and functioning of a community environment”^{vi} can either support people in meeting daily needs or present such obstacles that many of these needs go unfulfilled. Access to affordable housing, transportation, and community services are pivotal to enabling independence and a supportive environment.

Island environments and the small rural communities of the Gulf Islands may not be equipped with the level of infrastructure and services that can provide mobility challenged seniors and people with disabilities with options for independent living. Nevertheless, seniors on Pender may be gradually facing more challenges in participating in community life and enjoying independent living.

While there are cautions against using census data for populations as small as the southern Gulf Islands, the 2011 census data for North Pender Island Local Trust Area, finds that in 2011 there were:

- 400 seniors in the 65-74 age group
- 190 people in the 75-84 age group; and
- 55 people aged 85 years and older.
- The “baby boomers” (using data for those aged 60-69) have a population of 520.^{vii}

On North Pender Island, ensuring an accessible built environment and enabling the ability for people to age in place or have at home care may be the most important and attainable goals within the Local Trust Committee’s authority. The goal of this project is to understand the degree to which North Pender Island can become a more supportive and inclusive community for aging seniors and people with disabilities.

Relevant Policy and Land Use Considerations

Trust Council Strategic Plan

This project supports the 2011-2014 Islands Trust Council Strategic Plan: “Goal C – Sustain Island Character and Healthy Communities.” Specifically, Goal C.4:

The Islands Trust will work to enhance the economic sustainability and security of island communities by:

- Creating linkages between islanders and regional districts to share effective economic development models ;
- Continuing to advocate for sustainable, affordable and appropriate ferry Services;
- Using land use planning tools and decisions to positively affect housing, food security, farmland protection, and socio-economic diversity.

Islands Trust Policy Statement

This project is consistent with the Islands Trust Policy Statement *Part V: Sustainable Communities, with specific relevance to Directive Policy 5.8.6:*

5.8.6 Local trust committees and island municipalities shall, in their official community plans and regulatory bylaws, address their community’s current and projected housing requirements and the long-term needs for educational, institutional, community and health-related facilities and services, as well as the cultural and recreational facilities and services.

Official Community Plan

North Pender is well served by facilities for health care, education, public protection, and community and social services. Most facilities are provided through the voluntary initiatives of members of the community. Residents value maintaining a diverse community able to accommodate people of varying ages, income and abilities. In order to achieve this, the community may need to explore options for ensuring housing for working people, young families, seniors and those who have special needs. Currently, seniors housing is provided at Plumtree Court, which is owned and operated by the non- profit Pender Islands Seniors Housing Society (NPI S. 2.3 Background).

The goals, objectives and policies of the OCP that are relevant to age and disability friendly planning are:

2.1.F

Subject to policies in Subsection 2.3 of this plan (Seniors and Affordable Housing policies) consideration may be given to applications to rezone land within the Rural Residential and Rural designations to a higher density where the additional density takes the form of seniors and affordable housing.

CommunityServiceObjectives (sic)

- 2. To ensure that North Pender Island is a healthy community with residents working together to improve the quality of life.*
- 3. To facilitate community services that meet the social and physical needs of the community.*
- 4. To support community facilities through efforts of community members.*
- 5. To ensure that all community service facilities are accessible to all members of the community.*
- 6. To permit a range of housing options without detracting from the rural character of North Pender Island.*

CommunityServicePolicies

2.3.1 Preference shall be given to applications involving community service facilities that will be located close to the school and medical centre, the library, the Driftwood Centre and the fire stations.

2.3.2 Regulations shall require that adequate parking facilities be provided in any expansion of existing public facilities or in the development of new facilities.

2.3.3 Land acquired or dedicated for public service use may be zoned for public service use within any land use designation except the Agricultural designation or zone.

CommunityServiceAdvocacyPolicies

2.3.4 Development of recreational and cultural facilities to serve the needs of all groups within the island community, including people with special needs, is encouraged.

2.3.5 Public service facilities shall be for the Pender Islands only.

2.3.6 The North Pender Island Local Trust Committee should support and encourage efforts to expand or improve the electronic communications on the island in order to reduce the need to travel.

Seniors Housing Policies

2.3.7 The LTC will support efforts by organizations or agencies to conduct a seniors housing needs assessment within the community.

2.3.8 Applications for rezoning to a higher density than permitted by current zoning may be considered within the Rural Residential and Rural land use designations, subject to the other policies in this plan, where the application would result in the provision of seniors housing.

2.3.9 Any additional density greater than that permitted by current zoning shall be in the form of units reserved exclusively for occupancy by seniors.

2.3.10 Any application should include an assessment demonstrating the need for the proposed type and number of seniors housing units in the community.

2.3.11 The number of units should not exceed the number identified as needed for the community by a seniors housing needs assessment.

2.3.12 Any application should result in units being located on land suitable for development, including in areas with modified ecosystems, accessible to existing services and on reasonably level terrain.

2.3.13 Developments should be encouraged to incorporate water conservation measures and energy efficient building design elements.

2.3.14 Applications may take the form of any of a range of housing options from fully independent units to supportive care.

2.3.15 Applications may involve units in the form of clustered detached dwellings, duplexes or attached ground-oriented housing.

2.3.16 Applications may include the provision of units through, public agencies or not-for-profit organizations.

2.3.17 Applications shall include provision of a housing agreement limiting occupancy of the dwellings to seniors. Such a housing agreement may also include provisions limiting rental, lease, sale or share prices of the units.

2.3.18 The Local Trust Committee may consider requiring development information for seniors housing rezoning applications through adoption of a development approval information bylaw.

Seniors Housing Advocacy Policies:

2.3.19 The Local Trust Committee will encourage agencies, organizations and ministries to support or undertake efforts that would allow seniors to remain in their own homes as long as possible.

Land Use Bylaw

The North Pender Island Land Use Bylaw 103 requires:

6.5 Parking for Disabled Persons

6.5.1 *If a use requires more than 30 parking spaces, one additional parking space for persons with physical disabilities and one space for a pick up/drop off area must be provided.*

6.5.2 *Each parking space provided under Subsection 6.5.1 must have a width of at least 3.7 metres; be clearly identified for use only by disabled persons; and be located so as to provide the most convenient access to an accessible building entrance or, if the parking area serves several premises, so as to provide equally convenient access to all such premises.*

Analysis

The publication, “Planning for the Future: Age-friendly and Disability-friendly Official Community Plans,” offers guidelines for local governments in British Columbia to improve accessibility in their communities when updating Official Community Plans^{viii}.

Age-friendly, Disability-friendly Guidelines

Guideline #1: Include a commitment to accessibility and inclusion in the overall vision or mission section of the OCP.

- NPI OCP doesn't currently have such a commitment in its Broad community Goals or Statement of Principles.

Guideline #2: Actively invite the participation of people with disabilities and older people in the development or revision of the OCP as well as in all other local government public participation processes. Include disability and senior-serving organizations, individuals, family members and other related groups and individuals.

- This is a good rule of thumb for all engagement strategies.
- Outreach can be targeted to disability and senior-serving organizations, individuals, family members and other related groups and individuals.
- Consider how to plan and organize accessible public events. It may also be helpful to organize a range of meetings at different times of day to allow as many people as possible to attend.
- When designing websites, surveys, questionnaires or other public written communications it is important to use plain language and try using alternative formats such as Braille and large text so that a wide range of people are able to participate.

Guideline #3: Include goal statements in the OCP on key topics that have been shown to positively influence the quality of life of people with disabilities and older people, and to contribute to the development of healthy communities for everyone.

- Including policies that relate to the well being of people throughout the OCP foster a sense of community and influence the health and accessibility of new developments.
- While the NPI OCP has a thorough section on “Seniors” and “Affordable Housing,” policies to ensure accessibility can be integrated into existing sections of the OCP. (For example in the “Statement of Principles,” “Planning for Sustainable Communities,” “Transportation Services,” and “Community Recreation/Future Parks.”)
- The guidelines for Development Permit Area 9 (Commercial and Industrial) (form and character) can be amended to include designing the built environment to enable accessibility.
- UBCM has resources to inform such a process, for example a publication “Age-Friendly Rural and Remote Communities: A Guide.”^{ix}

Guideline #4: Complete an age-friendly and disability-friendly assessment of your community to discover what already works around accessibility and inclusion and what needs improvement.

- This is an area of research that would benefit from the LTC initiating a survey or audit of people’s experience with the accessibility of North Pender Island.
- It is recommended to focus on one or two areas such as assessing the built environment and the location of services.
- Any recommendations from such a process should be incorporated in the OCP and/or the LUB.

Guideline #5: In the OCP commit to having a local government committee that can continue to provide feedback and direction to elected officials and staff on aging and disability issues.

- On North Pender Island it would be helpful if such a committee had representation from different community and other government agencies such as Island Health, CRD, and perhaps MoTI.
- Alternatively, the NPI LTC could consider liaising with existing organizations.

Project Scope and Timeline

Please see the attached Project Charter for the Project Scope and Timeline. The objectives of the project are proposed to include:

- An age-friendly and disability-friendly assessment of North Pender Island using online and paper questionnaires or surveys.
- Consideration of amendments to the OCP to ensure the built environment, transportation, housing, and services are accessible for seniors and people with disabilities.
- Consideration of amendments to the Land Use Bylaw that may improve the

standards of accessibility required in the built environment, especially in commercial zones.

Resources and Roles

The LTC has an approved budget of \$2500 for “road and transportation” amendments which is not currently a top priority, and is unlikely to incur any expenditures this fiscal year even if initiated early next term. If the LTC endorses the project charter, this budget could be re-allocated to support the “Age and Disability Friendly Community Planning” project. Reallocation within an LTC is at management discretion and no resolution is required (Budget Control and Adjustment Authority Policy (6.5.ii)). An update to the Financial Planning Committee will be required.

Please see the attached Project Charter for more detail on roles and in-kind resources.

Communications

Communications for this project are to draw on best practices recommended for consulting with seniors and people with disabilities. A key strategy is to go to where the community already gathers and take advantage of any already scheduled meetings that the seniors or people with disabilities might attend. Outreach can be targeted to disability and senior-serving organizations, individuals, family members and other related groups and individuals. It may also be helpful to organize a range of meetings at different times of day to allow as many people as possible to attend.

The age-friendly and disability-friendly assessment of North Pender Island will involve volunteer surveys or questionnaires offered in both paper and on-line. All communications materials will use large text to enable a wide range of people to participate. Questionnaires will be handed out at key community gathering places and service areas around the island.

Subject to available budget, the engagement process will be advertised in the local newspapers.

Consultation with other agencies such as Island Health, the Capital Regional District and relevant Provincial Ministries may be recommended as the process unfolds.

Project Charter

The attached Project Charter establishes the objectives, scope, and timeline of the project. (Note that this is a new format for the project charter developed by staff for use next term. It is still being revised, comments or feedback on the template are invited.)

Next Steps

Next steps include:

- Designing an age-friendly and disability-friendly assessment of North Pender Island in the way of an online survey and paper questionnaires

- Distributing the survey at strategic community locations and through key community groups
- Planning 1-2 public meetings for the fall
- Project manager to attend any meetings of senior or disability serving organizations as opportunities arise

Summary of Planning Recommendations

The goal of this project is to understand the degree to which changes to land use planning policies and regulations can result in North Pender Island in becoming a more supportive and inclusive community for aging seniors and people with disabilities. The objectives of the project are proposed to include:

- An age-friendly and disability-friendly assessment of North Pender Island using online and paper questionnaires or surveys.
- Consideration of amendments to the OCP to include policies supportive of a built environment, transportation, housing, and services that are accessible for seniors and people with disabilities.
- Consideration of amendments to the Land Use Bylaw that may improve the standards of accessibility required in the built environment, especially in commercial zones.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. THAT the North Pender Island Local Trust Committee endorses the project charter for the Age and Disability Friendly Community Planning project.
2. THAT the North Pender Island Local Trust Committee request staff to prepare an age-friendly and disability-friendly assessment for North Pender Island using online and paper questionnaires or surveys.
3. THAT the North Pender Island Local Trust Committee request staff to schedule 1-2 community meetings to get input from seniors and people with disabilities on how land use planning policies and regulations can be improved to make North Pender Island a more accessible community.

Prepared and Submitted by:

Justine Starke, Island Planner

August 7, 2014

Name, Title

Date

Concurred in by:



Robert Kojima

August 15, 2014

Date

Regional Planning Manager

References:

ⁱ “What would it take to make British Columbia the most progressive jurisdiction for people living with disabilities?” Submission of the Disability Without Poverty Network, March 2014.

ⁱⁱ The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006.

<http://www.un.org/disabilities/convention/conventionfull.shtml>

ⁱⁱⁱ *ibid*

^{iv} “Accessibility 2024: Making BC the most progressive province in Canada for people with disabilities by 2024.” Province of British Columbia,

http://engage.gov.bc.ca/disabilitywhitepaper/files/2014/06/Accessibility-Summit-LargeType_Accessible.pdf

^v Hodge, Gerald, *Geography of Aging: Preparing Communities for the Surge in Seniors*, McGill –Queen’s University Press, 2008, p. 91).

^{vi} *ibid*, p. 25.

^{vii} Statistics Canada, Custom Tabulations, 1991-2006 Census, and Semi-custom Profile, 2011 Census. Reproduced and distributed on an "as is" basis with the permission of Statistics Canada.

^{viii} Mahaffey, Rebecca in collaboration with Alice Miro et al; “Planning for the Future: Age-friendly and Disability-friendly Official Community Plans,” (2010).

^{ix} Age-Friendly Rural and Remote Communities: A Guide.

http://www.ubcm.ca/assets/Funding~Programs/LGPS/Current~LGPS~Programs/SHSI/LGPS_AgeFriendly_Guide_AFRRC.pdf