

Community Development Forum, Halfmoon Bay

Report on Activities from September 2022 to December 2023

INTRODUCTION

The [Community Development Forum](#) (Forum) is an arm's length volunteer group under the Halfmoon Bay Community Association (HBCA) which proactively engages on significant issues related to land development and its impact on the Halfmoon Bay community and environment, and advocates for land use in alignment with the [Official Community Plan](#). Our aspiration is to act as a community focal point and liaise with experts, governments, and community groups on issues of interest, and to advocate for effective practices, policies and laws.

The Forum was launched by a group of residents in September 2022 in response to increasing community concerns about development and land use in Halfmoon Bay. We focus on issues impacting on, or of interest to, neighborhoods and the wider Halfmoon Bay community, and do not address highly localized issues.

The Forum's [committee members and volunteers](#) hold monthly meetings with the regular attendance of Halfmoon Bay Area B Director, Justine Gabias. More information about our work, including terms of reference, meeting minutes and issue papers can be found on our [webpage](#).

WHAT DID WE WORK ON?

Some of the key activities during the reporting period include:

- **Bayview Hills development (27 acres):** First raised in 2021, [community concern about the alleged development infractions at Bayview Hills](#) (above Coopers Green) has resulted in on-going investigations by the SCR D, the Province of B.C. and the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans. *Development was stopped in April 2022 and we await the outcome, including proposed remediation. In the meantime, Forum volunteers continue to monitor the situation.*
- **Proposed higher density development above Truman Road (17.4 acres):** This proposed development involves a large tract of forested land upslope from Truman Road. The developer has applied to the SCR D to amend the OCP and zoning to change this lot from low density development (~ 6 lots) to higher density (~ 48 lots). [Local residents have asked the SCR D not to approve upzoning](#) due to issues around sewage disposal, stormwater runoff, geotechnical implications and environmental impacts. *Forum volunteers continue to monitor the status of the developer's application, which the SCR D is reviewing, to ensure that the community is ready to engage when the final proposal is tabled with the SCR D Board.*
- **Wood Bay Heights (5 acre SCR D park)** Community members approached the Forum to assist with understanding the zoning, covenants, and restrictions related to the 5 acre park. Due to its

productive wetlands and habitat for migratory birds, the park was dedicated to the SCRD when the subdivision was created. *Local residents are working with the SCRD to help manage the park.*

- **Preserving Coastal Douglas-fir and associated ecosystems:** Ecologically important and at-risk Coastal Douglas-fir and associated ecosystems along the lower Sunshine Coast are being permanently converted by human activities due to increased private land development. *The Forum has prepared an [Issue Brief](#) which it will use to advocate with the SCRD for better tools to protect rare and endangered ecosystems.*
- **RV parks on Stephens Way (~31 acres):** Community concerns have been raised regarding the development of two large RV parks along Stephens Way. These are being privately developed, apparently without guidance from the SCRD and without public consultation. Research by Forum volunteers shows what appear to be significant gaps and contradictions in SCRD and BC government laws, raising concern that these two developments have the potential to evolve into unplanned, unserviced longer-term residential areas, with density far exceeding current zoning. At the same time, we recognize that the regulation of Campgrounds, RV and Mobile Home Parks needs to strike a balance between ensuring public safety, maintaining ecological health, and allowing for a diversity of affordable housing options. *The Forum's research and concerns have been shared with the SCRD, which has responded that this will be addressed during the upcoming OCP renewal process (2024-2025).*
- **Telus Wilderness Point (124 acres):** In 2021-22, Telus constructed eight cabins and boardwalks along the shoreline of the Sechelt Inlet (which, surprising to many, is in Area B, Halfmoon Bay). This was done contrary to the current rural zoning of the property and without obtaining building permits. Most of the cabins and boardwalks are also non-compliant with the setback requirement of 15 meters from the natural boundary of the ocean. The property is remote, only accessible by boat, and in an area that is highly valued by residents for its natural characteristics. In July 2023, Telus applied post factum for a Development Variance Permit to vary the Zoning Bylaw. *Given the apparent egregious violation of SCRD bylaws, the Forum believes that the SCRD Board should deny the development variance permit application, that relevant fines should be applied, and restoration required, and that Telus should be instructed to abide by all relevant bylaws, regulations and processes. The Forum researched and posted an [Issue Brief](#) which explains this position. Telus has since withdrawn its application and the SCRD (and Forum) are waiting to hear about their proposed next steps.*
- **Brooks Road (39 acres)** Community members expressed concern related to unauthorized land use on Brooks Rd (DL5416, adjacent to Smuggler Cove). Given that there are three Development Permit Areas (DPAs) on the lot, a query to the SCRD in early November uncovered that neither Development nor Building Permits have been issued to the owner. SCRD Bylaw staff subsequently issued a Stop Work order and are investigating concerns about unauthorized land alteration. *A Forum Issue Brief is forthcoming in early 2024.*

In addition to engaging with the community on issues, we also engaged with local government as they advance significant land use planning projects that will impact the future of Halfmoon Bay:

- [SCRD Official Community Plan Renewal](#) - These plans set the vision for our community, define zoning and density, and set restrictions such as Development Permits Areas for steep slopes, watercourses or other sensitive areas. The renewal process should begin in earnest in 2024.
- [SCRD Development Approval Process Review](#) - Review of the Regional District's development review and approvals process was completed in 2023, and the SCR D is now implementing the [recommendations](#).
- [SCRD Regional Growth Planning](#) - A [report](#) including mapping of potential growth areas and strategic recommendations was presented to the SCR D Board in 2023. The SCR D Board now has to decide whether to proceed with a regional growth strategy.
- [SCRD Climate Action Plan](#) - the SCR D [Climate Risk Assessment Report](#) was presented to the SCR D Board in 2022. A SCR D community climate action plan is being prepared, although the timeline is delayed with no clear date for finalization.
- [SCRD Water Strategy](#) - The SCR D is developing a 5-year Water Strategy. The public consultation period closed in June 2022, and a draft Water Strategy should be presented to the SCR D Board in early 2024.

WHO DID WE COLLABORATE WITH?

During the reporting period, the Forum received two grants from [West Coast Environmental Law](#) that allowed us to retain an environmental lawyer at pro bono rates. These grants were made possible by community contributions (~20% of total) from the [Halfmoon Bay Community Association](#) and the [Halfmoon Bay Environmental Society](#). The lawyer assisted the Forum with: understanding applicable laws, gaps and possible next steps by citizens; preparing correspondence to government officials; and preparing briefs.

In October 2022, the Forum co-hosted with the [Sunshine Coast Conservation Association](#) and [Organizing for Change](#) a meeting on "[Revitalizing Local Government Environmental Protection Tools on the Lower Sunshine Coast](#)". A small group of community leaders and local government officials from along the lower Coast brainstormed on legal protections that can be put in place, and how community groups can work with governments to move this forward.

An immediate follow-up to this meeting is that the Forum submitted a successful project proposal to the [University of Victoria Environmental Law Center \(ELC\)](#), which assigned a law student and senior lawyer to analyze existing legal protections on the Sunshine Coast, and propose better ways to protect ecosystems and aquifers in the face of anticipated future development. The first phase of this project, from October to December 2023, involved a review of the SCR D bylaws to identify where the SCR D could strengthen ecosystem protections in its decisions related to land developments and OCP amendments, drawing upon the best practices identified in the [Green Bylaws Toolkit \(2021\)](#). *The report is anticipated in January 2024, after which the Forum will engage with the ELC on a possible second phase.*

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