



July 9<sup>th</sup>, 2020

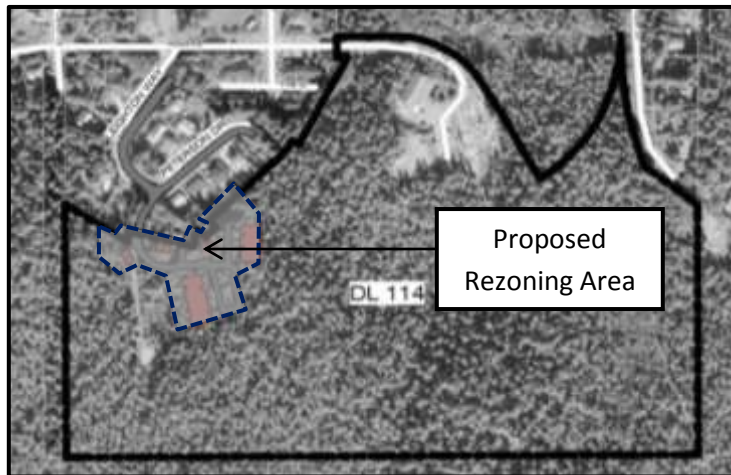
**RE: DL 114 Below-Market Affordable and Attainable Housing Rezoning Proposal**

Dear Tofitians and our Arnet Road, Leighton Way and Peterson Drive Neighbours,

We are writing to you to reach out to make sure you aware of the **July 20<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 pm Public Hearing at the Community Hall** – with appropriate COVID-19 protocol in place – for the proposed rezoning. There will also be an information meeting at 5:30 pm prior to the Public Hearing so you can ask questions of the Tofino Housing Corporation, Catalyst Community Developments Society and District staff. We also invite you to email us with any questions before July 20<sup>th</sup> so we can be sure you have the most accurate information about the project.

More information on the Public Hearing can be found at <http://tofino.ca/public-hearings#Notice>. If you cannot make the Public hearing in person written comments should be mailed to the District of Tofino or emailed to [pthicke@tofino.ca](mailto:pthicke@tofino.ca) and [corporateservices@tofino.ca](mailto:corporateservices@tofino.ca) by **noon on July 20<sup>th</sup>**.

- Proposal
- 2 apartment buildings with 72 units, 70 parking stalls and 96 bike storage spaces
  - 3 lots with duplexes with potential for suite in each half-duplex
  - New public road with 2m multi-modal path and some on-street parking
  - Clustered development to minimize development footprint



We look forward to a successful rezoning and construction beginning, maybe as early as late fall 2020. The construction of 72 apartment rental units with below-market rents and 6 half duplexes with suites will make a significant dent to Tofino’s long-standing housing challenges. At least 2 of the half-duplexes will be market homes and the other 4 may be sold as Price Restricted Resident Restricted homes (e.g. sold at cost or moderately subsidized by the Tofino Housing Corporation to qualifying households). This is a project decades in the making and we are pleased to be this close to making it a reality.

We know the construction period will be a disruptive and having new residents in the neighbourhood will bring some changes. Long-term this project will bring many positive benefits to Tofino and new neighbours and friends – families, children, seniors and Tofino workers – to the neighbourhood. Over the past few years we have heard many words of support, but also concerns and questions. We trust the information provided on the following pages will provide you with relevant background information. All documents and studies referenced can be found on the Tofino Housing Corporation website at [www.tofinohousingcorp.ca](http://www.tofinohousingcorp.ca).

Cordially,

Ian Scott, Interim Executive Direction, THC  
[execdirec@tofinohousingcorp.ca](mailto:execdirec@tofinohousingcorp.ca), 250-884-6202

Robin Petri, VP Development, Catalyst  
[robin@catalystcommdev.org](mailto:robin@catalystcommdev.org), 604 312 5835



## **The Bigger Picture**

### ***Is there still a need for this project?***

Study after study has demonstrated the lack of suitable and affordable housing for those who live and work in Tofino, particularly for younger adults and families. In 2015 the Housing Needs Assessment identified long-term secure rental housing and attainable homeownership as two of the four most critical needs. In 2018 we completed a survey of those seeking housing and received over 200 responses. A 2018 survey of businesses found lack of housing for workers – leading to overcrowding of staff accommodation and lack of workers to run businesses as effectively as possible. Based on the results of the business survey we estimated the need for over 200 additional year-round beds to meet the housing needs of this portion of the Tofino workforce. Based on lack of availability, rental rates and anecdotes from many we know, the Tofino housing challenge has not gone away.

### ***Why is the District investing in housing? Isn't this a business issue?***

The District, via the activities of the Tofino Housing Corporation, is investing primarily in housing that will be rented or sold to households, families and individuals who live and work in Tofino and want to make Tofino their permanent home. Suitable, affordable and secure housing is a critical part of any sustainable and healthy community. In a community like Tofino, with a seasonal tourism visitation peak, there is a need for staff accommodation. However, there is a greater unmet need for housing where Tofino residents – families, employees, business owners, seniors and those on fixed incomes – are able to rent or purchase a home and make it their own, secure in the knowledge they can remain year after year wherever they choose to work and without fear of their landlord asking them to leave.

### ***Why is the District investing in housing? Isn't this the role for the private sector?***

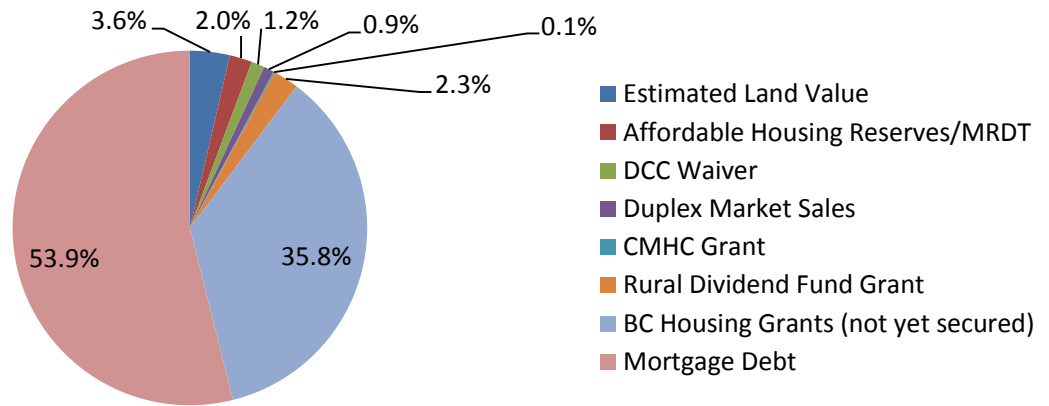
Below-market, perpetually affordable housing is not well-provided by the private sector. Older housing stock often serves that purpose to some extent, but there is not nearly enough in Tofino. Communities up and down Vancouver Island and across Canada have government-affiliated housing agencies or non-profit organisations providing and operating below market housing. In our situation, the Tofino Housing Corporation – owned by the District of Tofino, and the Catalyst Community Developments Society – a non-profit organisation, are working together to deliver this type of housing. Neither organisation will be making profits and any operational surpluses, after covering mortgage debts and operating expenses, will be reinvested into lowering rents or building more affordable housing. In 2016, the private sector was given the opportunity respond to a Request for Proposals to use DL 114 lands for a combination of private and affordable housing: no responses were received.

### ***Is this a wise use of my taxpayer money?***

Yes, but only a small amount of tax revenues are going into these projects. Instead the District is leveraging its modest contributions (approximately 8%-9% of capital costs for DL 114) to secure funding and low-interest rate financing from provincial and federal government sources. The District has provided free land to the THC that it will lease without charge for 60-100 years to Catalyst Community Developments Society. Financial contributions to date from the District have come from: A) affordable housing and capital reserves as a result of private development amenity contributions; and B) the 3% MRDT bed tax on AirBnB accommodation. When the housing is built, up to 50% of the Development Costs Charges (DCCs) will be waived, an option also available to any private developer guaranteeing similar affordable housing, which will require an offset with taxation revenue. However, most of the financial contributions to the DL 114 project will be from sources other than the District (39%) or will be held as a mortgage (54%). The capital costs of approximately \$21.3 million for the DL 114 apartment buildings, including the new public road and servicing, will generally be distributed according to chart on the following page.



Funding sources for DL 114 apartment building Capital Costs.



### The Neighbourhood Picture

#### **Why is this type of housing being built in this neighbourhood?**

This land was chosen because it is owned by the District of Tofino and was identified, along with the Sharp Road site, as the best available District lands. DL 114 was first selected by a District of Tofino committee in 2004 as the most suitable District land for attainable and affordable housing. DL 114 is designated for housing in the Official Community Plan and the Local Area Plan developed in 2008 identifies a mix of housing types for the neighbourhood. DL 114 was also partially zoned for housing in 2010. Since the THC was restarted in 2017, we reconfirmed DL 114 as being an excellent option for affordable and attainable housing development and Council has since reconfirmed its interest in using the DL 114 lands for housing.

#### **Why isn't the access off of Arnet Road near the Community Hall instead?**

As illustrated in the Local Area Plan it is envisioned that this new neighbourhood will be accessed from both Arnet Road and Peterson Drive/Leighton Way. We selected this particular location now for a number of reasons:

- 1) Part of the area around the Community Hall was / is being considered for a recreation centre.
- 2) The length of road required to access good housing development would be longer and the topography steeper if access was from Arnett Road. Also a large wetland would constrain development options.
- 3) The developable land accessed off of Peterson/Leighton is more suitable for apartment housing.
- 4) The main sewer line is being built along Arnet Road and through DL 114 to Industrial Way. It wasn't fully designed nor was there a clear timeline for construction established when project planning started.
- 5) It is a recognized community planning principle to locate new housing adjacent to existing residential neighbourhoods rather than be set further away.

From *Vision Tofino Update – Official Community Plan Bylaw 1200, 2013, Appendix B – District Lot 114 Local Area Plan Section 3.0*





***The lands you are developing are sensitive environmental lands, why are you not developing on previously cleared sites or the bike park?***

The District does not own a large enough cleared site and the District and Tofino Housing Corporation cannot afford to purchase such lands, even if they were for sale. The bike park land is too small for the planned number of units and that land remains reserved for a recreation centre. As per the Local Area Plan, development was envisioned to occur on the western portion of DL 114 to conserve the older forest and riparian areas to the east. We have done more detailed environmental investigations and identified additional wetlands, riparian areas and steep slopes that are inappropriate areas for development and we have focused our development to the least environmentally sensitive areas. Our proposal clusters the housing and increases the density so that more households will have access to housing with a smaller development footprint thereby minimizing the disturbance of the mature forests.

***The development is in a sensitive environmental area that cannot sustain pollution.***

The development includes a progressive rainwater management plan that will include rain gardens for absorbing and treating pollutants next to the parking areas, ditches designed to slow, clean and infiltrate rainwater, and dispersal of rainwater overflows outside of the riparian zones to allow for further infiltration and absorption by forests prior to the rainwater reaching wetlands or creeks.

***The development will cause traffic issues and is too much density for the neighbourhood.***

The traffic study by the firm Bunt and Associates indicates that at the busiest hour of the day the day (peak hour) there will only be on average 1 extra car every 90 seconds. Since the site is already zoned for single family housing with suites, the result of the rezoning is only one extra car every 4 minutes during the peak hour. All the roads and intersections are already designed to engineering standards acceptable for this level of neighbourhood density, with the exception of the Peterson Drive/Leighton Way intersection that will be reconfigured.

***The development will make walking and biking in the neighbourhood unsafe.***

We are responding to suggestions from District staff and neighbourhood residents by adding a painted pedestrian way and speed bumps along Leighton Way. We have also revised the new public road design to incorporate a 2m multi-modal path from Leighton/Peterson Way up to the apartment buildings. We encourage the District to work towards having a similar connection all the way to First Street and into town.

***There is not enough / too much parking.***

We have heard both comments and we are trying to build a development that encourages residents to walk, cycle and use transit. The location close to town with its services, shops and employment makes it a good place to walking and cycling. We will have excellent bike storage and plug-ins for electric bicycles. At the same time we recognize many Tofitians own cars and use them to go to work, to get to and from Tofino, visit friends and go to the many beaches and trails in the region. We will have four parking stalls for each duplex and have 70 stalls planned for the apartment buildings. We will designate at least 7 stalls for visitors and the remainder for our residents. Based on studies in more urban places vehicle use in affordable housing developments is 30-50% less than in market housing. While we don't have good data for Tofino, based on the experience of the Whistler Housing Authority they would expect about 5% of households to have two vehicles and 15-20% of residents to have no vehicles. The preliminary new road design also includes approximately 8 stalls of on street parking between Leighton Way/Peterson Drive and the trail head to Tonquin Beach, which will provide additional visitor parking. If we do end up with too much parking we can convert part of the parking area to gathering or gardening spaces.