



TOWN OF SIDNEY

PRESS RELEASE

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SIDNEY COMMISSION TACKLES BIG ISSUES

A little over a year ago, the Town of Sidney created two Commissions, the Community Development Commission (CDC) and the Healthy Community Commission (HCC). The purpose of these Commissions, as Mayor Larry Cross describes it, "Is to identify and explore key issues central to Sidney's long-term development as a vibrant, interesting and authentic place to work and live." Both Commissions have a responsibility to make recommendations to Council about these key issues.

Chaired by Diane Thorp, Vice President of the Community Arts Council, the CDC already has one major success under its belt, the development of an electronic community calendar. "More and more people and organizations are using the community calendar," Diane said at a recent Commission meeting. "We are very grateful to Ryan Leinweber and his firm, Honeycomb Webworks for developing and maintaining this exciting new community resource, entirely at his own expense. This is a very exciting development for the area since we now have an easy-to-use central location for organizations to post their events and for people to check out what's on." The calendar is accessed at www.mypeninsula.ca

In addition to the community calendar, the CDC is developing a cultural asset inventory, as part of its effort to highlight Sidney and the peninsula as a rich and diverse cultural centre on the South Island. "The area has so many cultural groups," said Graham Debling, President of the Sidney Museum Society. "I think most people will be amazed at both the number and diversity of these groups." Once complete, the cultural asset inventory will be posted on the Town of Sidney's Website to better inform local residents about the multitude of organizations open to them and, as Graham added, "To promote the creative side of Sidney to visitors from around the world."

Two other priority issues currently under investigation by the CDC are "branding" and "workforce housing." Both of these are seen as critical to Sidney's development over the next several years.

"The effort to develop a common peninsula "brand" is challenging," says Lisa Maker of the Pier Hotel, who serves on the Commission as one of its four citizen representatives, "but once in place the brand can be used by organizations throughout the region. We hope it helps to define Sidney and the peninsula as a destination point." Illustrating the collaborative nature of the CDC's work, Lisa adds, "We are pleased to work with the Chamber of Commerce, the Sidney Business Association and other organizations to ensure that we have the input of as many individual and organizations as possible."

The other big issue, workforce housing, is viewed central to Sidney's long-term economic sustainability. Almost 75% of the employers who responded to a recent survey conducted by the Commission, said that they experience difficulty recruiting, hiring and/or retaining employees because of the shortage of affordable workforce housing in Sidney or on the Peninsula. "This is the number one issue for employers—and for young families who want to live and work in the area but simply cannot afford it" says Mel Couvelier of the Memorial Park Society who heads the CDC's Infrastructure Working Group. "This is a big issue to tackle," he adds, "but there is no time like the present to roll up our sleeves and explore as many short and long term options as possible." These are just some of the challenges the CDC is tackling. Watch this space for periodic updates!

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