

MAYOR'S COLUMN

TAKE 5 SEPTEMBER 2016

There are many things we all cherish and value about our Town. On our waterfront, we have world-class recreational and gathering opportunities at Transfer Beach, plus kayaking, paddle boarding, canoeing, marinas, trails, heritage, arts and culture, as well as marine businesses.

For more than 20 years, successive Councils have grappled with how best to further develop this jewel to maximize both recreational and economic opportunities. The area is not without its challenges, mainly due to the legacy of 100 years of industrial use. In addition, there are several different stakeholders in the area we consider the Ladysmith Waterfront, including the Town, Stz'uminus First Nation, provincial government and private landowners.

Before we move ahead on any new initiatives on our waterfront, it's vital to have a current and well-thought-out plan. This is why we are now updating the Town's Waterfront Area Plan. The original plan was adopted in 1997 and forms part of the town's overall Official Community Plan. The main purpose of the Waterfront Area Plan is to guide land use and development on the Ladysmith waterfront. After the 2009 Ladysmith Community Sustainability Vision confirmed the community's interest in a mixed-use waterfront, the Town knew we needed to update the Waterfront Area Plan in order to integrate the many ideas and elements of character, identity and use that the community developed through the visioning process. We are ready to move ahead with this update.

After much discussion, Council has determined the geographic area that is the focus of this project – mostly lands that are undeveloped and are of prime importance to completing the Town's waterfront. The Rocky Creek Industrial Park and Transfer Beach Park (which are within the boundary of the current Waterfront Area Plan) are not included in the review.

It has taken a long time to get to this point, but in some ways I am grateful for the timing. The Stz'uminus First Nation have centuries of history on the lands and waters of Ladysmith Harbour. Council sees this Waterfront Area Plan Update as a Reconciliation Project, and will be working in close partnership with Stz'uminus Chief, Council, elders and citizens throughout the project.

In order to have a really great plan, we need to make sure we engage stakeholders, partners, neighbours and the community. Engaging with the community is a key strategic priority of Council for 2016. The Waterfront Area Plan update is a chance for us to make that happen. We have set up a process that will involve community representatives, property owners and neighbours throughout the project in a number of different ways.

We are striking a Property Owners and Tenants Working Committee so that we involve those who have active interests in our waterfront. We will also be appointing members of the

community to take part in a Design Charrette. A design charrette is an intensive planning session where citizens, designers and others collaborate on a vision for future development. It provides a forum for ideas and offers the unique advantage of giving immediate feedback to the project leaders. The focus of the Waterfront Design Charrette is to illustrate, in visual representation, the potential land use and design aspirations for the waterfront uplands, including the Machine Shop area, and the adjacent water lots.

We will also be holding a series of community engagement sessions, including a speakers' series. Topics could include what other communities are doing or have done with their waterfronts, "place-making", vibrant communities and waterfront development – I'm looking forward to sharing more details as the project moves ahead.

In 2009, members of the community envisioned a "waterfront for all" that involved a mix of natural areas, recreation, marinas and marine activities, residential and related commercial development, and traditional industrial and related uses. The new Waterfront Area Plan Update Project is an opportunity to take that vision, update it, and create guidelines for development and land use that will move us towards realizing that vision.

My ultimate vision of the waterfront may not be exactly the same as yours. I sincerely hope that if we all work together and try to take part in the process as it unfolds over the coming months, we will be able to help create a new Waterfront Area Plan that reflects our collective values and those of our neighbours, celebrates our heritage and keeps our waterfront accessible while creating new opportunities for economic growth and jobs.

We will be providing regular updates on the project itself and on ways to get involved. Check local advertising, our website at www.ladysmith.ca, our facebook page www.facebook.com/LadysmithBC and twitter (@TownofLadysmith). You can always call City Hall (250.245.6400) to get more information.