



Cobble Hill Village

DESIGN CHARRETTE SUMMARY



Prepared for the Cowichan Valley Regional District
by DIALOG.

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SUMMARY

Purpose of the Toolkit

The Village Toolkit provides a practical set of design tools and resources that can be used to enhance the livability of the Cobble Hill Village core. Fundamentally, this document looks at how the desires and needs of the community can be reflected in the village's historic visual character.

By examining how people see and experience Cobble Hill Village and acting on their concerns surrounding community development, traffic control and pedestrian safety, the foundation can be laid for attracting and informing a new generation of businesses and residents to Cobble Hill. Long-time residents clearly expressed that as newcomers and investors are inevitably drawn to Cobble Hill, they want them to be respectful of its rural character and to honor the volunteer efforts that have taken place in the community.

The toolkit has identified short-term community beautification projects that can be achieved by local community and business leaders coming together. Long-term collaborative projects that involve roadways and pedestrian thoroughfares will rely on community organizations and champions working side by side with various levels of government to achieve a shared vision.

Finally, the *Design Guides* provide an illustration of how new residential and commercial development can be integrated into the village core in a way that enhances the village's identity.



Working in Partnership

Making the design vision for Cobble Hill Village come to life will require a shared belief within the community that by protecting and enhancing the village core, it will add to the economic and social well-being of Cobble Hill and the surrounding region.

Local business people attending the Cobble Hill Design Charrette showed a great willingness to collaborate in making Cobble Hill Village an attractive location to establish a business. From a customer attraction standpoint, local businesses recognize the benefit of accommodating new permanent residents and a steady influx of new visitors to the village.

Working in collaboration with local not-for-profit-organizations and community volunteers, business owners already play a role launching, supporting and participating in events and in creating spaces that support meeting, socializing and networking. Through their ongoing investment in storefront restoration and their activities in the community, businesses can help the village achieve its potential and enhance its character.

Local village business owners have recently formed a not-for-profit society – the Cobble Hill United Merchants Society (CHUMS) that is aimed at:

- Building connections among Cobble Hill business owners, residents, and like-minded local and regional organizations to broaden local and regional awareness of Cobble Hill as a vibrant and welcoming community in which to live, work, and play.
- Foster initiatives and events to enhance the beauty, heritage, livability, and social connectivity of Cobble Hill.

As this group evolves, it will collaborate with other key organizations in the community such as the Cobble Hill Farmers Institute, the Cobble Hill Events Society, the Cobble Hill Historical Society and Economic Development Cowichan (EDC). It is hoped that the Village Toolkit will serve as a resource and reference tool as CHUMS develops projects that promote and enhance awareness of Cobble Hill.

Through the Cowichan Valley Regional District, Economic Development Cowichan has a mandate to work with local organizations and individual businesses who are seeking to diversify the economic base of the region.

EDC also plays a role in connecting entrepreneurs, artists, local food producers and investors to help drive the development of new commercial activity in the Village. To foster this connectivity, Economic Development Cowichan can be of assistance in:

- Identifying public sector grant programs that support the development of new village infrastructure, cultural and heritage programming and business investment
- Creating an online inventory of available commercial space in Cobble Hill Village
- Connecting Cobble Hill Village to EDC projects surrounding value-added agriculture and the development of the South Cowichan region as a cycling, wine and culinary destination
- Linking Cobble Hill merchants to opportunities for enhanced business development or succession
- Profiling local success stories in Cobble Hill on the EDC website
- Connecting village businesses to resources that will assist them in diversifying or building their capacity to expand
- Helping to create business incubator projects in the village that will attract young entrepreneurs

Within a broader CVRD context, the economic and community development aspirations of Cobble Hill Village businesses and residents can be reflected through responsive zoning. Resolving long-standing challenges in Area C surrounding water management at Fisher Road and traffic safety will require ongoing discussion between the CVRD, provincial regulators, and the community. As new ideas for implementing village improvements continue to emerge for Cobble Hill, residents expressed that they desire innovative, volunteer-driven solutions that will not result in tax rate increases.

As many residents expressed during the Charrette “the village is for everyone and it is the heart of Cobble Hill.” Residents also expressed that the village can be a showcase for all that is good about the region – agriculture, culinary, wine and recreational amenities, and the region’s unique and vibrant tourism and business offerings.

Commentary

Captured below is a compilation of suggestions raised during the Charrette for:

1. Promoting Cobble Hill Village
2. Enhancing and Celebrating the Village’s Identity and Character
3. Managing Traffic, Walkways and Pedestrian Traffic
4. Creating Community Infrastructure
5. Attracting New Businesses, Residents and Investment to Cobble Hill

PROMOTING COBBLE HILL VILLAGE

- Create and Promote Lure Pieces (new infrastructure and events) that will attract people from throughout the region.
- Create additional reasons for people to come to the village – vintage fairs, regular activities like Music in the Park and the Farmers Market, visual art festivals like “Artists on Holland Street”
- Capitalize on Cobble Hill’s proximity to the wine region
- Communicate activities in the village and surrounding area through community notice boards, a village website, improved signage at key entrance points to the village and in key cycling and hiking areas like



Cobble Hill Mountain/Quarry Park.

ENHANCING AND CELEBRATING THE VILLAGE'S IDENTITY AND CHARACTER

- Add color and public art to the village core
- Install murals with bright bands of color and brightly-colored, low-cost umbrellas
- Create “layered” wall treatments, with projections onto blank walls, seating and gathering spaces in front, along with easy to manage greenery and agriculturally themed sculptures
- Make agriculture the theme of public artwork
- Create appropriate wayfaring signage to support the village identity
- Create a wine festival in the village, potentially themed around a wine that is distinct to the region. Use this festival as a fundraising opportunity to support local improvements.
- Align celebrations and activities with the Cittaslow Movement, which supports the development locally owned businesses and locally sourced goods and services and promotes the social connection between agriculture and community
- Host a road hockey tournament

MANAGING TRAFFIC, WALKWAYS AND PEDESTRIAN TRAFFIC

- Make sure the village is accessible and pedestrian friendly – build connections from the village across the highway to the Quarry Park and make the village core safe and amenable to walk through
- Move heavy trucks off Fisher Road and away from the village
- Create new industrial gateways to the Village
- Improve the cycling access/pathways in the community
- Improve the visibility and safety at major intersections
- Because of their cost, avoid using traffic circles as a traffic easement solution
- Install a pedestrian activated crosswalk on Cobble Hill Road
- As we address roadway and pedestrian challenges, be mindful of addressing drainage and run-off issues

CREATING COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

- Create a Community Garden and Community Kitchen somewhere within the core
- Build amenities that enhance the social connection between people – picnic tables and a public barbeque or a community oven
- Create a designated area for food trucks to pull up during special events
- Create or attract a Daycare to the village
- Build a Skateboard Park
- Create a signature piece of infrastructure at Quarry Park, like a revitalized train station
- Improve the cycling infrastructure in and around the village
- Make sure the development of affordable Seniors Housing is a priority

ATTRACTING NEW BUSINESSES, RESIDENTS AND INVESTORS TO COBBLE HILL

- Build flex/incubator business space using revamped rail cars and install these facilities in a visible location at Quarry Park for seasonal use
- Create a food cooperative or permanent farm market store in the village (similar to Great Greens Market)
- Catalogue the business succession and investment opportunities available in the village
- Help existing businesses expand and make sure that businesses are aware of the resources that are available to them
- Support the existing value-added wood production (cabinet making, trusses) that is taking place near the village core
- Add to the social spaces in the area with additional coffee shops and small retailers



