District of SECHELT

FOR INFORMATION

TO:	Committee of the Whole	**MEETING DATE:**	April 9, 2025
FROM:	Kevin Pearson, Senior Policy Planner		
SUBJECT:	**Meeting Provincial Requirements for the Official Community Plan**		
FILE NO:	6480 OCP Review 2024		

PURPOSE

Pursuant to the *Local Government Act* (Act) updates to residential policies are required by the end of 2025 to support housing. With background information and analysis, this report confirms that the present residential policies within the Official Community Plan (OCP) are now aligned with recent provincial requirements of the *Act*. Therefore, further updates to the residential policies by the end of 2025, and in advance of the overall OCP review, are not required.

BACKGROUND

There have been a number of recent mandates and initiatives regarding the current OCP and its update. The main one is a provincial mandate, which last year had the new housing requirements of Bill 44 (2023) 'Housing Statutes (Residential Development)' added to the *Local Government Act*. Accordingly, the new provisions state that the residential policies, maps and designated areas of all municipal OCPs in British Columbia must be consistent with an updated Housing Needs Report (HNR) by the end of 2025.

New section 473.1 of the *Act* ("Official Community Plan and Housing Needs Report") prompted the District to commission an updated Housing Needs Report (HNR) approximately one year ago, which was received by Council in the Fall of 2024.

Using methodology prescribed by the Ministry of Housing, our updated HNR identifies a need for the District's OCP to accommodate a land and density capacity of 726 housing units by the end of 2026 and a total of 2,890 units by the year 2041. The five and twenty-year time horizons of the HNR begins at the last Canada Census year of 2021.

Coinciding with its 2023-2026 Strategic Plan to support effective growth and efficiencies with housing availability, Council directed staff to streamline the development density provisions in the current OCP. Bylaw Amendment No. 492-35 was adopted in December 2024 with new OCP policies supporting increases to floor area ratios (FAR) and building heights in the current residential designated areas of Sechelt.

It is now apparent that with this amendment and without any mapping changes, the current OCP appears to be consistent with section 473.1 of the Local Government Act.

In addition, the Small-scale Multi-unit Housing (SSMUH) amendment to Zoning Bylaw No. 580 last June to better accommodate small-scale multi-unit housing has brought that bylaw into

compliance with Section 481.3 of the Act. These amendments have resulted in a 'win-win' scenario for the District in terms of meeting the new provincial housing requirements and permits us to focus on creating the new OCP rather than on further amendments. Noting that the new OCP will also need to include provisions for housing demand described in the HNR.

It is recognized the HNR projections may be on the high side with a development pace of approximately 150 new housing units built annually over the 20-year period, whereas historical, 20-year residential trends are closer to an average of 100 units constructed annually.

RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL

Using the District's GIS, the analysis reveals that our OCP residential policies are now aligned with Section 473.1 of the Local Government Act. That is, with the new policies adopted in December 2024 to support increased FARs and building heights, the quantity of reasonably serviced residential land with development potential is more than sufficient for the required 20-year housing unit forecast.

Land Criteria

OCP Designations:	Residential Special Infill Areas Multi-family / Mixed Use Residential
Zoning:	Residential Zoning
Infrastructure:	Within 50 m of the District Sanitary Sewer System Within 50 m of the SCRD Water System Mostly fronting dedicated and constructed road(s)
Combined Gross Area:	Approximately 4.5 km ^{2} (450 ha)

Land Discounted for Net Area

Riparian areas:	Less provincial 'streamside protection and enhancement areas'
Development:	Less existing building envelopes and encumbrances
Steep slopes:	Less potential hazardous slopes > 20%
Roads/parkland:	Less 20% for additional road and parkland dedications, utility and access rights of ways
Combined Net Area:	Approximately 1.7 km^2 (170 ha) } See **Map 1**

Areas by Residential Land Use Designations

Residential	137 Ha	81%	See **Map 2**
Special Infill Areas	19 Ha	11%	
Multi-Family / Mixed Use Res.	14 Ha	8%	

Potential Build Out Scenarios

Land Use	OCP FAR	Floor Areas (m²)	Unit Areas (m²)	Potential No. of Units
Residential	0.55*	753,500	250	3,014
Special Infill Areas	1.50	285,000	220	1,295
Multi-Family/ Mixed Use Res.	2.40	336,000	200	1,680
			Total Units	**5,989**

*Average of 0.5 & 0.6 in the Residential category

DISCUSSION

The above presents a conservative estimate using practical criteria for gauging land development potential at the OCP policy level. While the existing OCP refers to a large supply of residential land available for future development, there is no similar analysis differentiating between serviced / unserviced lands, discounts of unsuitable land, unit absorption potential based on land use designation policies, or land area quantities, nor effective servicing plans to utilize some of the lands for housing development.

Along with cyclical market conditions, there are always technical variables to consider at the development stage that are difficult to quantify in a high-level analysis such as this.

Different zoning restrictions, unknown sub-surface conditions and approval requirements are some of the site- specific challenges that can lessen the net land potential; likewise, density can be clustered and increased in certain areas. There is ample flexibility considered in this analysis for lesser densities with larger units or higher densities with smaller units.

Moreover, with new OCP height policies supporting 3 - 6 storey buildings in these designations, the capacity for our housing needs and options into the future also becomes that much higher. Therefore, no further amendment to the OCP to increase density is required at this time. The broader OCP update can continue, and density recommendations will be presented to Council in due course.

POLICY AND BYLAW IMPLICATIONS

With knowledge that the residential policies of the current OCP bylaw now meet provincial requirements, the District can focus its planning efforts on drafting the new bylaw in a more holistic manner. There are a host of other required policy topics to consider for the next OCP that are discussed in a separate report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

By demonstrating a sufficient quantity of serviced land for future residential development, the need to expand hard infrastructure further outwards over the next 20 years becomes less necessary. From the perspective of future demands on services, capital planning, operational budgets, and assets management in general, the implications are positive for the District.

INTEGRATED COMMUNITY SUSTAINABLE PLAN

1. Sustainable Community Growth and Development

STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLICATIONS

1. Effective Growth
2. Housing

COMMUNICATIONS

None.

Respectfully submitted,

Kevin Pearson, RPP, MCIP
Senior Policy Planner

Attachment: Maps 1 & 2 Residential Development Potential

Residential Dev Potential
Map#1

Legend

Residential Development Potential

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District of SECHELT

0 0.5 1 2 Kilometers

Analysis Criteria:

- Lots >750 m² Area
- Zoned Residential
- Within 50 m of the Sanitary Sewer System
- Not within Riparian Areas
- < 20% slopes
- Less Building Envelopes

Results:

Combined Area: Approximately 1.7 km2

Residential Development Potential
Map #2



Legend

Land Use

- Multifamily Mixed Residential 8%
- Residential 81%
- Special Infill Areas 11%

0 0.3 0.6 1.2 Kilometers

Results:

Combined Net Area: Approximately 1.7 km2

N W E S

District of SECHELT

Aeroquest Mepcon and SCRD, Maxar