

**POWELL RIVER REGIONAL DISTRICT**  
**SOUTHERN REGIONAL DISTRICT OCP REVIEW**

**Community Survey: Summary of Responses**

A total of 287 forms were completed and returned. This represents almost 18% of the 1,600 forms distributed, considered to be an exceptionally high response. In addition, a couple of the forms included information from two household members, bringing the total number of respondents closer to 290.

**The Respondents**

Over a quarter of the respondents (73 or 25.4%) reported that they live in the Black Point area. Myrtle Rocks, Lang Bay and Kelly Creek each accounted for 13 to 15% of respondents (43, 40 and 37 respectively), while just over 6% of respondents live in each of the Brew Bay, Paradise Valley and Stillwater/Scotch Fir Point neighbourhoods (18, 19 and 18 respectively). The remainder live in Saltery Bay, Thunder Bay or identified their neighbourhood by road name. Three respondents own property in the SRD but do not live there.

Long-time residents . more than 20 years . accounted for 96 or over a third of all respondents. Another 67 (23%) have lived in the area more than 10 years, and 35 (12%) between six and 10 years. In all, 163, over half of the respondents (56.8%), have lived in the SRD for more than a decade. Almost a quarter of the respondents (72) have called the SRD %home+for from one to five years, and 11 (3.8%) have lived there less than a year.

Of the 83 people who reported that they had moved to the SRD within the last five years, over half . 47 or 56.6% . moved from Metro Vancouver and the surrounding area. Six people or 7.2% moved from Vancouver Island or Alert Bay. Ten people (12%) moved from the City of Powell River, four (4.8%) moved from other parts of B.C. and ten (12%) from other provinces. A total of five people came from the U.S., U.K., France or New Zealand.

Almost half . 140 or 48.8% . of respondents claimed to be retired, although a number either farmed, consulted or did volunteer work. Working outside the home occupies 109 (38%), while 33 (11.5 %) have home-based businesses and 8 (2.8%) are homemakers.

Of those who work outside the home, 84 or 77% (or 29.3% of all respondents) work in the City of Powell River. Almost a quarter . 26 or 23.9% (or 9.1% of all respondents) . work in the SRD. The remaining workers travel throughout the Powell River area, or to Vancouver, B.C. and Alberta, the U.S. and the U.K.

**What Respondents Like About the SRD**

In this section, the survey offered 14 possible reasons that people might like living in the SRD, with the option of providing other reasons. The responses were weighted, with the #1 reason being given a weight of 15, the second reason a weight of 14, and so on. The maximum number of points possible, if all 287 respondents had given the same reason as their first choice, would be 4,305. In terms of importance, the reasons rank as follows, with the number of respondents who chose each category as their #1 reason for living in the SRD in the last column (as a percentage of all respondents):

1.	Rural lifestyle	3,317 points	99 (34.5%)
2.	Natural beauty of the area (aesthetics)	3,124 points	72 (25.1%)
3.	Large lots/acreages	2,635 points	44 (15.3%)
4.	Proximity to outdoor recreation and or natural amenities	1,991 points	24 (8.4%)

5.	Safe place to live	1,655 points	27 (9.4%)
6.	Affordable housing	1,510 points	31 (10.8%)
7.	Lack of regulations	1,485 points	31 (10.8%)
8.	Proximity to the City of Powell River	1,388 points	12 (4.2%)
9.	Waterfront	1,288 points	52 (18.1%)
10.	Sense of community	1,151 points	13 (4.5%)
11.	Agricultural opportunities	871 points	12 (4.2%)
12.	Proximity to family	625 points	10 (3.5%)
13.	Proximity to employment	510 points	5 (1.7%)
14.	Off grid (independent services)	504 points	7 (2.4%)
15.	Wide-open view	45 points	3 (1.1%)
16.	Great neighbours	25 points	

Additional reasons given included the following:

- Quiet and peaceful for perfect retirement
- No winter (relatively)
- Proximity to Palm Beach, Lang Bay store, bus service
- No neighbours
- Low population density
- Lower taxes

### **Sustainable Growth**

Of the suggested approaches to accommodate sustainable growth, almost half of respondents . 138 or 48% . believe that more or expanded community water systems or a regional water system is appropriate. Twenty-four respondents (8.4% of the total) felt that cluster housing is appropriate for their neighbourhood. Community sewer systems or package treatment plants were thought to be appropriate measures by 65 or 22.7% of the respondents. In total, 227 or nearly 80% of respondents seem to be in favour of some approach to sustainable development.

Other suggestions included regulation and planning . i.e., more control of septic systems, some form of regulations, green buffers between sites, and more flexibility with regard to subdividing. A variety of suggestions were made as to the appropriate lot size, ranging from two to not-less-than five acres.

Forty respondents (almost 14%) felt that the current character should be maintained, with no change and no attempt to accommodate growth. Water, a significant concern, was cited as an issue to be addressed in this context. Solutions included connecting to the City's water system, water conservation, a regional water system and protection of the current systems. To ensure adequate sewerage, sewer systems for cluster housing and waterfront homes, package treatment plants, and large lots on septic systems were suggested.

Other services needed to accommodate growth included transit service, more recreational facilities, natural gas, renewable energy, learning to live with what we have, and social housing. On the other side of the issue, some respondents want no additional services.

### **Housing and Lot Sizes**

A number of lot sizes were presented as options for the appropriate size for future single-family development. The greatest number of respondents . 122 or 42.5% . felt that 1-acre lots were the best size. A ½-lot size was cited by 80 respondents (27.9%) as being most appropriate, while 61 (21.3%) chose 5 acres or larger. Almost a tenth . 9.8% . thought that ¼ acre would be appropriate. A total of 80% felt that lot sizes of 1 acre or less would be generally appropriate.

As alternatives, a number of different lot sizes were suggested, none smaller than ¼ acre, but three in support of 10 acres or more. A number of respondents felt that a range of lot sizes, based on a plan, topography, water and sewer services, and the needs of residents would be appropriate.

With regard to the acceptability of more urban forms of housing, the majority . 231 or 80.5% . did not want to see this in their neighbourhood. On the other hand, 33 (11.5%) found alternative forms of housing acceptable. A further 22 (7.7%) were not sure about the concept. Issues to be addressed before proceeding with alternative forms of housing included water supply, sewerage, housing form and consultation with current residents.

### **Commercial Development**

When asked if there was a need for more commercial development, 174 (60.6% of all respondents) felt there was not. Almost 30% . 85 respondents . felt that there was, and 23 (8%) were not sure. Some commercial services that were suggested, however, include a gas station, a bank machine and a postal outlet.

Over half . 150 or 52.3% . of respondents believe that commercial development should not be scattered throughout the SRD. On the other hand, 84 (29.3%) felt that this would be appropriate. A significant number . 42 or 14.6% . were not sure, and some want to hear the rationale for both.

Again, 150 respondents (52.3%) do not support the establishment of a main commercial centre in the SRD, while 89 (31%) do. Another 38 (13.2%) have not made up their minds yet. Comments included the belief that the population base would not warrant expanded services and the acceptability of additional services in existing commercial area. Of the areas suggested in the survey, Black Creek was favoured by 74 respondents (25.8%) and Lang Bay by 23 (8%), while another 22 (7.7%) were not sure. Other areas suggested included Vanderkamps/Augusta Road, Sunspot 101, McLean Road, the Airport Reserve Lands and Saltery Bay. Other respondents felt that Powell River was the appropriate location for commercial services.

Nearly half . 135 or 47% . of respondents would like their commercial services to focus on local retail and personal services for residents of the SRD. Tourist-related uses such as a motel, hotel, restaurants or gift shops were deemed appropriate by 55 (19.2%), while 34 (11.9%) supported the concept of residential units above commercial space. Services desired by respondents included those noted earlier . a gas station (18 or 6.3%) postal (10 or 3.5%) and banking services . as well as a neighbourhood pub, agricultural and forestry services, a grocery or general store, a hardware store, a restaurant and some light industrial uses. A number of respondents commented that they do not want additional services.

### **Industrial Development**

Over half of the respondents . 156 or 54.4% . do not think there is a need for more industrial areas in the SRD. While 54 (18.8%) believe there is such a need, 64 (22.3%) are not sure. Three people suggested that light industrial might be a possibility.

Of those who responded yes, 11 (20%) felt any additional industrial uses should be located inland, away from residential and agricultural uses. Another 10 (18.5%) suggested the Lang Bay, Brew Bay, or Vanderkamps area. Other suggestions included Black Point and Highway 101, focused on the highway, in Powell River, Duck Lake Road, the Airport Reserve Lands, Paradise Valley, close to the airport, scattered throughout the SRD, or where industrial uses now exist.

## **Utilities**

When asked if they felt there are problems with septic systems in their neighbourhood, more than two-thirds of respondents (196 or 68.3%) said no. On the other hand, 40 (13.9%) felt that there are problems. Another 48 (16.7%) are not sure.

Some of the areas where problems might exist include lots along the waterfront or foreshore, along drainage ditch frontages, on lots that are too small, old/tired/failing or poorly-maintained septic systems, and in specific locations such as the Brew Bay, Frolander Bay, Myrtle Rock and Black Point Road areas.

Understandably, half of all respondents (143 or 49.8%) do not support the development of community sewer services in the SRD. Thirty percent (86) do, however; and 17.4% (50) have not decided yet. A few people are concerned that the cost would be too great, while others feel that such a service might be appropriate in some more densely populated areas.

Almost two-thirds of respondents . 181 or 63% . draw their water from private wells. Another 34 (11.9%) use community wells or water systems, and 29 (10%) cited a Regional District system as their source of water. A total of 39 respondents (13.6%) identified specific creeks, improvement districts, waterworks, water districts, surface water, artesian spring, or other sources.

The majority of respondents . 207 or 72.1% . feel that their current water source will provide sufficient quantity and quality for their long-term needs. More than a fifth of respondents (62 or 21.6%), however, do not believe their current source will suffice; another 26 (9%) are not sure. Some people noted that the quality of their water is uneven, threatened or contains too much sediment.

Somewhat surprisingly, in light of the level of confidence in current water sources, over half of all respondents . 169 or 58.9% . support the concept of developing community water services. Comments such as absolutely and this should be a #1 priority were added. More than a quarter of respondents . 76 or 26.5% . do not support this concept. Another 35 (12.2%) have not yet made up their minds. Some feel it would be appropriate where necessary, if financed by users and if not privatized. Haslam Lake, Lois Lake, West Lake and Hammil Lake were suggested as possible sources.

## **Community Services**

While a number of respondents avail themselves of every type of recreational activity, first and foremost, residents of the SRD are great outdoors people. Almost all . 259 or 90.2% . pursue some form of outdoor recreation. Indoor recreation is popular with 72 respondents (25.1%); church, clubs, community or fraternal organizations with 68 (23.7%); arts, crafts and cultural activities with 58 (20.2%); and music and dance with 42 (14.6%). Specific activities noted include gardening, boating, ATVing or quading, fishing, sailing, camping, astronomy, curling, archery, horseback riding, yoga and volunteer activities.

Slightly more than half of respondents (146 or 50.9%) said that they are satisfied with the number of current public accesses to the waterfront and beaches. Many of the 123 (42.9%) who are not satisfied with current accesses were able pinpoint problem areas. The most common obstructions cited (by 60 or 48.8% of this group) were that many accesses are uncleared, unmaintained, impassable or were blocked, obscured or built on by adjacent property owners. Quite a few people (28 or 22.8%) noted that accesses were unmarked and unsigned . and

therefore unknown; more signage was their request. Twenty respondents (16.3% of this group) felt that more accesses needed, for example at Mahoodø, Brew Bay Beach and the end of Zilinsky, for locals, tourists and future residents. Another 10 (8.1%) pointed to the need for safe boat launch sites between Powell River and Saltery Bay. Access to specific areas . Stark Road, Pine Tree Road, Native Chief Point, Frolander Bay, Jenkinson Road, Swedebell Road, Maitland Beach, etc. . was said to be problematic. A few people singled out Donkersley Beach as having inadequate parking and washroom facilities. Only 18 respondents (6.3%) were not sure whether current accesses are adequate.

The use and location of current parks in the SRD satisfies two-thirds (183 or 63.8%) of respondents, but not 54 (18.8%) and possibly (or possibly not) another 36 (12.5%). A number of those who are not satisfied were unclear on what parks exist or where they are located. Some suggested that more land set aside for parks, recreational use, future needs, and recommended expansion of existing parks, more camping spaces, better wheelchair access and boat launch sites.

When asked what kind of parks they would like to see established, the most popular form was trails for walking, biking and hiking, favoured by 135 (47% of all respondents). Possible locations included wherever possible, Black Point area, along the highway into town, Stillwater Bluffs, Saltery Bay, the Airport Reserve, the pole line, between Nassichuk and Duck Lake Road, Brew Bay . among many others.

The second-most popular choice was natural or wildlife areas, chosen by 113 (39.4% of respondents). Eagle River and Stillwater Bluffs were the most frequently-cited locations for this type of park. Other suggestions were wherever possible, Jefferd Creek, other creeks, all wetlands and estuaries, lake shores, Myrtle Rocks area and Duck Lake.

More than a quarter of respondents (79 or 27.5%) would like to see more marine parks . particularly in the Myrtle Rocks/Point area, Brew Bay/Mahoodø area, Stillwater/Scotch Fir Point area, Lang Creek, the mouth of the Lois River . and wherever possible.

The next-largest group of respondents . 62 or 21.6% . felt that no more parks are needed.

Another 40 (13.9% of respondents) liked the idea of linear parks or corridors, especially for wildlife (for example, along Eagle River), for biking or walking adjacent to the highway into town, as accesses to beaches, or as a reestablished greenway transportation route.

Eight percent (23 respondents) would like to see more tot lots with playground equipment, specifically at Kelly Creek School or nearby, Black Point, Palm Beach and Myrtle Rocks area.

Additional suggestions included more enhanced signage, Saltery Bay across near the ferry terminal, Native Chief, Lois River where young people go to swim, an athletic park and as protection for watersheds.

Pedestrian or bicycle access and routes in the SRD are a source of concern for almost half . 139 or 48.4% . of respondents, but not for 98 (34.2%), while 38 (13.2%) were not sure. Safety along Highway 101 was the most-frequently cited concern, eliciting comments from 67 (48.2%) of those with concerns. Next, Padgett Road drew concerns from 18 (13% of this group). Many suggestions were made with regard for the need for bike lanes or wider shoulders on roads, pedestrian/bike paths, alternative routes for cyclists to get to town, the lack of shoulder clearing along the highway and better signage for bike and hiking routes, among others.

## **Environmental Protection**

The survey noted some natural areas that have been identified as worthy of protection, such as Haslam, Hammil, Duck and Lois Lakes; Myrtle, Deighton, Lang, Kelly and Whittal Creeks, the Lois/Eagle River and Stillwater Bluffs. Almost two-thirds of respondents (179 or 62.4%) said they were not aware of any other areas in need of protection. Sixty-three respondents (22%), however, had additional suggestions, such as Myrtle Rocks area; wetlands wherever they occur; Jefferds, Jenkinson, Park, Bishop and Albion Creeks; the Sunshine Coast Trail; waterfront and waterfront beaches; Saltery Bay watershed; the Powell River canoe route; Lois, Dodd, Nanton, East, Horseshoe, Boat, Third and Rainy Day Lakes; Eldred River watershed; heron rookeries on the Airport Reserve Land, Mermaid Cove . among numerous others.

Respondents were asked to evaluate a number of water-related issues in terms of the level of concern, from #1 (high) to #3 (low). If respondents opted to check issues rather than rate them by number, each checked issue was considered to be of high concern. The responses were weighted, with the highest concern given a weight of 3, the second a weight of 2, and the lowest a weight of 1. The highest possible score would be 861 points, if all 287 had given the same issue as their highest concern. In order of importance, the responses ranked the issues as follows, with the number of respondents who considered each issue their #1 concern in the last column (as a percentage of all respondents):

1.	Impacts of logging practices in watersheds	663 points	197 (68.6%)
2.	Adequate water supply for homes	615 points	166 (57.8%)
3.	Protection of streamside riparian/wetland areas	609 points	168 (58.5%)
4.	Managing development in watersheds to maintain natural hydrology and stormwater runoff	604 points	169 (58.9%)
5.	Groundwater quality	595 points	152 (53%)
6.	Surface water quality of streams	564 points	140 (48.8%)
7.	Water quality of marine foreshore	485 points	113 (39.4%)
8.	Impacts of float homes on lakes	413 points	70 (24.4%)

One respondent appeared to sum up the feelings of many with the comment that: ~~all~~ of these issues are very important+.

Asked if they support the concept of designating environmentally-sensitive areas, such as riparian areas, as development permit areas to ensure their protection, the majority . 225 or 78.4% . said ~~yes~~+ . More people were unsure, particularly about how development permits work (28 or 9.8%) than were against the concept (25 or 8.7%). Even if unsure about the functioning of development permits, many respondents are convinced that these areas need protection.

More than three-fifths (177 or 61.7%) of respondents felt that all lands in the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) should be retained for agricultural use. Over one-fifths (62 or 21.6%) opposed the idea, while quite a number (46 or 16%) admitted that they weren't sure. This issue drew many comments, with a total of 36 (12.5% of all respondents) acknowledging that some lands within the ALR may not be arable and that there should be a case-by-case review process. Another 22 (7.7%) stated reasons for retaining lands in the ALR, which included the need for self-sufficiency, the desire to eat local food and the need to encourage farming.

## **The Future**

Respondents were asked to rank 12 characteristics that they felt the SRD should maintain or strive to acquire in the future. People could also suggest other, equally or more important,

characteristics that they wanted retained. The responses were weighted, with the #1 reason being given a weight of 14, the second reason a weight of 13, and so on. The maximum number of points possible, if all 287 respondents had given the same characteristic as their first choice, would be 4,018. In terms of importance, the characteristics rank as follows, with the number of respondents who chose each category as their #1 characteristic in their vision of the future in the last column (as a percentage of all respondents):

1.	Rural atmosphere	2,907 points	87 (30.3%)
2.	Environmental responsibility	2,841 points	107 (37.3%)
3.	Natural setting (i.e., waterfront, creeks, trees)	2,807 points	76 (26.5%)
4.	Presence of agricultural lands and activity	2,367 points	47 (16.4%)
5.	Mainly single-family residential	1,902 points	42 (14.6%)
6.	Recreational opportunities	1,840 points	20 (7%)
7.	Walking/cycling community	1,779 points	27 (9.4%)
8.	Affordable housing	1,339 points	21 (7.3%)
9.	A destination for tourists	1,168 points	12 (4.2%)
10.	Economic opportunities	1,115 points	12 (4.2%)
11.	Variety of housing types	941 points	9 (3.1%)
12.	A stronger commercial centre	820 points	12 (4.2%)
13.	Increased bus service to rural areas	14 points	1 (.4%)
14.	Limited development, maintained the non-development atmosphere	14 points	1 (.4%)
15.	Encouraged industry	14 points	1 (.4%)
16.	Community water system in place	14 points	1 (.4%)

While environmental responsibility ranked second to rural atmosphere in total points, it is interesting to note that more respondents . 107 or 37.3% . selected environmental responsibility as their first priority than any other choice.

Additional characteristics given included the following:

- No high-end luxury gated communities
- No more bleach used
- Some retirement condos
- An acceptable Community Plan and zoning in place
- Protection against pollution
- No tourists or development
- Lots not less than 2-acre parcels
- Some light industry

Asked what their vision of the community would be in twenty years time, over half . 168 or 58.5% . saw it as similar to current, with single-family residential and limited commercial and industrial uses. A distant second choice . by 49 or 17.1% of respondents . was mainly single-family residential with some higher-density residential use, a stronger commercial centre and expanded commercial and light industrial areas. Only 22 (7.7%) saw the community as similar to current with some higher-density residential options and a stronger commercial centre, and approximately the same number . 21 or 7.3% . foreseeing a community similar to current but with some higher-density options.

Comments included similar to current with water system, retaining an agrarian/rural character, expanding the rural transit system, more low-cost land and housing, more community farm practices, a more cohesive and less haphazard community, and increased self-sufficiency.

## **General Comments**

Respondents were very thoughtful and comprehensive in providing additional comments, all of which are included in the transcript of compiled responses. An attempt was made to group responses according to topic or subject, but many responses touched on a number of topics. Thus the decision to include them in one specific category is somewhat arbitrary.

The greatest number of comments, 50 in all, have been categorized under Regulation and Planning, with most encouraging regulation through an acceptable OCP, a zoning bylaw, additional regulation or rules, however.

Under Development, Density & Use, 30 comments generally reflect a desire to retain density similar to what exists in the SRD, although the possibility of some carefully-planned clusters of housing, green development and retirement condos on or near the beach was mentioned.

Almost the same number of respondents (28) made comments that were categorized referring to Community Character, Lifestyle & Farming, although the distinction between this and the previous category is somewhat difficult at times. Generally, residents like the rural, agricultural atmosphere, but do not want the SRD to become just a retirement community. The desire to attract young families and tourists was noted, while paying attention to water, wildlife and environmental issues.

Water & Sewerage were the specific subject of an additional 29 respondents. As pointed out earlier in the survey, residents are concerned about their water supply . mainly for drinking, but also for irrigation of agricultural crops and fire protection. There appears to be significant support for the development of more extensive (regional) water system. There does not appear to be such support for a regional sewer system.

Under Transportation, Safety & Other Services, issues such better bus service, lower speeds . and monitored speed limits . on roads, reduced ferry fares for residents, better access to other areas such as Squamish and the Lower Sunshine Coast, etc., were cited by 23 respondents.

Fourteen respondents made comments that have been classed as Nature & Environmental Issues. These include concerns over backyard burning, the effects of logging practices, the use of bleach, the need for overall ecological health and preservation of wildlife habitat, trees and riparian areas.

Nine people made additional comments regarding the need for walking/cycling paths, access to the waterfront and beaches and the need for more parks, trails, paths and green spaces. These are found under Parks, Trails, Beach Access & Greenways.

An similar number of comments (10) address Political & Other Issues. These include suggestions to expropriate TFL 39, fewer politicians and better communication and forward-thinking by the PRRD.

Finally, another eight respondents' comments were determined to refer to Financial & Economic Issues. These include the need to broaden the tax base through more economic development and comments both in favour of and against higher taxes.