

## Proposed site for a new Cowichan District Hospital looks promising: Project team gathers for first master site planning session

As part of the ongoing work on the business plan to replace Cowichan District Hospital (CDH), members of the project team, area leaders, physicians and representatives from the Cowichan Valley Regional Hospital District participated in the first master site planning meeting in early March.

With site geological and technical surveys for topography, soil, air, sunlight, wind, water and drainage now complete, hospital design and construction specialists shared a first glimpse of the possibilities for situating a new facility on the proposed site. So far, the future looks bright!

Chief Planning Officer Ken Champoux led the session by setting an intention to keep the patient experience at the forefront of every decision and encouraging participants to explore ideas today that allow the site to evolve without interrupting the flow of patient care.

Feedback from the first site planning meeting will be used as a starting point, says Kerry Beauchamp, lead for the replacement project's design and construction work stream. "We're taking what we've heard and creating the first draft of a master site plan."

Master site plans can be described as the bird's eye view of a site. For the purposes of the business plan, Island Health will need to propose a recommended layout which includes rationale for the location of the buildings and service blocks; their

orientation on the property; entrances and exits to the main service areas; and high level attributes of the property such as landscaping, parking, power and data centres, helipad and loading docks. "It's important to note that final decisions will be confirmed through extensive staff and partner engagement before they are finalized during later phases of the project," notes Ken. "Our business plan requires approval and funding from the province to proceed to the next phases of the project, which will involve greater collaboration."

Dr. Tom Rimmer, Cowichan-based family physician, says the session provided an opportunity to weigh in early on things that are important to him and his patients. "There is an incredible collegiality among local physicians and allied health professionals which benefits our patients and our care teams," notes Dr. Rimmer. "A design that fosters ongoing collaboration is something I'd like to see carried over into the plans for a new facility. This will support the ongoing provision of high quality, patient-centred care in our community."

"It is fascinating to gain an understanding into all the factors that go into building a master site plan," notes Dr. Michelle Weizel, Area Medical Director for Cowichan. "From environmental factors, engineering and regulatory factors to patient wellness factors – just to name a few. I left the session feeling confident that Kerry's team is taking all of these factors and more, into consideration to design



*Architect Lynn Webster and Cowichan Medical Director, Dr. Michelle Weizel, shift building blocks around the site topographic model, considering how different options might impact wayfinding and natural light.*

a sustainable building that will provide an effective environment for healing both for patients on the day it opens and for the patients of the future."

Area Director Emma James, agrees. "I feel so privileged to be part of this work and I am encouraged by the levels of collaborative planning and expertise that will ensure success."

"CVRHD Directors have placed high value in community participation and input, from the initial site selection meetings, through rezoning, to the master site planning session that was recently completed," says Ian Morrison, Chair of the Cowichan Valley Regional Hospital District. "Our First Nations vision, doctors and CDH staff views, working with the expert design team, gives the Board a high level of confidence that a strong business plan will be developed and ultimately be approved, so funding can be secured and work can begin on the next phase."

**So far, here's what we've learned about some of the attributes and "big picture" considerations of the proposed site at Bell McKinnon Road:**

- **The size is right:** The 20 acre property allows for flexibility and future expansion within the site.
- **A welcoming space:** Hospitals should be quiet sanctuaries of healing. The high-level vision is to create a welcoming environment for all who come to the site for care or work, with areas that promote healing and active living. When developing the design, special consideration will be given to incorporate the following elements:
  - ◆ **Sunlight:** Studies show natural light aids recovery for patients and contributes to a positive environment for visitors and staff, who spend large portions of their days at work. Maximizing sunlight also reduces reliance on fossil fuels and electricity to heat and illuminate the building, which reduces our carbon footprint.
  - ◆ **Nature:** Whether it's a scenic view for inpatients, a healing garden with native plants, or the possibility of recreational opportunities for staff and visitors, access to nature is known to have positive effect on our minds and bodies. Landscape specialist, Jill Robertson, says "a sense of loveliness and natural beauty" on the site will promote a "space of healing and welcoming for patients, visitors and staff."
  - ◆ **Ease of navigation:** Accessibility and wayfinding were discussed in great detail. Participants explored the benefits of "stacking" certain service areas vertically to reduce travel time for patients and staff, and allowing space between other areas. In many new hospitals, entrances to inpatient units are located away from the hustle and bustle of outpatient diagnostic and treatment services, allowing the inpatient experience to remain quiet and tranquil.
- **Parking, accessibility and alternate transportation options are being studied:** Getting the right mix of parking, public and active transportation is a key consideration of the business plan for a new facility. The team is paying close attention to the many ways people may be travelling to and from the facility. Business planning will consider wheelchair, bus, bicycle, helicopter, ambulance, automobile and pedestrian traffic, while also considering ways these may change over time. Gas powered cars of today may shift towards electric vehicles tomorrow, and later evolve into self-driving vehicles as technology changes.



*Cowichan family physician, Dr. Tom Rimmer (standing left), Clinical Lead, Janeen Kidd (seated) and CDH Site Director, Janet James (standing centre) discuss pros and cons of site configuration options with Brad Manderville (seated left), Scott McCarten (centre) from Capital Planning and Senior Project Coordinator, Niki Bortolotto (right).*

- **Environmental responsibility is a priority:** All new publicly funded facilities in BC are being designed and constructed to meet a minimum of LEED Gold (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) building standards. This includes sourcing responsible materials, finding renewable energy solutions and using prevailing winds, sunlight, water, rain and other climate patterns to our advantage to ensure the atmosphere indoors and outside our facilities contributes to healthy people and a healthy environment.

**Next steps: Version 1.0 of the master site plan for a new CDH gets underway**

Feedback from this introductory session will be used to create a first draft of a master site plan. Project leads will continue to work alongside the province, the Cowichan Valley Regional Hospital District, staff and physicians, local First Nation communities and patient partners in these early stages. If the business plan is approved by government, the project will receive funding to proceed to the Procurement phase and then onto the more collaborative Design and Construction phase, where additional working groups will be formed to develop the official designs.

The project team would like to acknowledge the Cowichan District Medical Society for providing financial support, physician attendance and input into the business plan; and the Cowichan Valley Division of Family Practice for providing physician input and attendance at our planning sessions.