



# District of Central Saanich

Council Workshop

*What We Learned Summary Report*

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ENGAGEMENT, FACILITATION, COMMUNICATIONS & CHANGE

## Council Workshop Summary

On February 2, 2026, the District of Central Saanich Council hosted a workshop to explore two key amenities for the future of 1903 Mt. Newton Cross Road: medical services and affordable housing; it also touched on the pros and cons of leasing vs selling. The session included Council, staff, and community partners representing housing, healthcare, First Nations, and the Saanich Village Association, to gain insights and share perspectives on community needs, opportunities, and ideas that will help shape the redevelopment plan and inform the upcoming developer Request for Proposals (RFP). In total, five members of Council and 11 representatives from other government and community organizations, as well as senior District staff, attended this two-hour workshop.

## Creating a Sense of Place and Vibrancy

Participants kicked off the meeting by sharing that they want the site to feel like a true community hub—welcoming, walkable, and connected to Central Saanich’s village character and history. Thoughtful planning—including appropriate parking—will support a vibrant centre that feels like home and strengthens community life. The following points were shared:

- **A strong sense of community**  
Participants want a neighbourhood that maintains the feeling of Central Saanich—welcoming, community-focused, and rooted in local history, including Indigenous origins. A strong sense of home, belonging, and connection.
- **Walkability and everyday services**  
Walkability was highlighted as a key element for a vibrant centre, that must also be easy and safe to move through. Residents should be able to walk to daily services, shops, and amenities, supporting “living locally” and reducing reliance on cars. (Following the meeting, a participant also suggested including a book drop off kiosk in the development to enhance library services in the neighbourhood.)
- **Community events and gathering spaces**  
Participants emphasized the need for safe, inviting places for community events, connection, and programming—spaces that build and strengthen community relationships and support year-round activity.
- **Thoughtful amenities and infrastructure**  
A vibrant place must also function well. Participants noted the importance of well-planned transit, parking, and connection to nearby neighbourhoods being key to ensuring the area works well, feels accessible, and supports long-term community needs.

## Affordable Housing: Exploring Opportunities

Participants suggested several ways to include affordable housing while keeping the project financially feasible. Strong partnerships—with First Nations, nonprofits, community organizations, and senior governments—are key to creating mixed-income housing for seniors, families, and people with lower incomes. There is a need to be thoughtful when adding density, so it supports affordability while still fitting the neighbourhood and its services. The following key points were noted:

- **Building through partnerships**  
Collaboration with First Nations, non-profits, community organizations, and senior governments is necessary. Partnerships increase resources, reduce risk, support reconciliation outcomes, and can support First Nations' ability to leverage land and projects for funding and to advance ongoing land negotiations.
- **Incentives and reduced barriers**  
Providing incentives and clear processes can make development easier and more cost effective. This could include creating a reward framework for projects that diversify unit types and tenure. These tools encourage developer participation and help lower the overall cost of delivering affordable units.
- **Strategic use of public land**  
Using municipal or First Nations land can lower project costs and strengthen applications for provincial/federal funding. This approach creates opportunities to deliver more affordable units within mixed income developments.
- **Diverse and inclusive housing**  
Offering a range of housing—such as co-ops, below-market accessible seniors' housing, downsizing options, and pet-friendly accessible rental units ensures housing for all stages of life ("living in place").
- **Balanced growth that fits the neighbourhood**  
Participants emphasized that density must be added in a way that fits Village character and infill guidelines, using thoughtful design to respect neighbourhoods while supporting financial viability.
- **Tools for long-term affordability**  
District ownership of units can help maintain affordability over time. Implementing long-term strategies with mixed-use design and accessible features helps maintain a stable supply of affordable homes for future generations.

## Health Services: Meeting Community Needs Close to Home

Participants strongly supported adding more healthcare services on the site to improve access to care and ease pressures on the hospital. Walk-in primary care, urgent care, diagnostics (i.e. MRI, X-Ray), and allied health were identified as key needs. Flexible medical spaces and housing for healthcare workers were suggested as ways to attract healthcare providers. Strong partnerships with Island Health, First Nations, Capital Regional Hospital District (CRHD), and nonprofits were identified as being essential to making the services sustainable. Key points from the discussion include:

- **Expanded community healthcare services**  
Participants identified the need for better access to walk-in primary care, urgent care, family doctors, and diagnostic and lab space. Bringing these services closer to residents will ease pressure on the hospital and improve access as the population grows and ages.
- **Flexible and future ready medical spaces**  
Medical spaces should be flexible enough to support multiple doctors, and other health professionals. They should have adaptable layouts so they can shift as community needs change, such as virtual care and self-service tools that will help ensure facilities remain useful over the long term.
- **Attracting and supporting healthcare providers**  
District owned medical space, long-term leases, reduced rents, and fee relief can help draw practitioners to the site. Housing options and live/workspaces for healthcare workers would further support recruitment and retention.
- **Strong partnerships and community input**  
Partnerships (such as with First Nations, Island Health, Capital Regional Hospital District, nonprofits, and local medical professionals) are essential to delivering successful healthcare services. Ongoing engagement with medical professionals is especially important for confirming which services the community needs most.
- **Purpose built, dedicated health facilities**  
Participants emphasized the need for dedicated medical space in the redevelopment. Facilities should be developed to meet demand and designed specifically for medical use.
- **Thoughtful, responsible site planning**  
Planning that supports services for healthy aging and health programs will help ensure the site benefits the whole community.

# Leasing and/or Selling: Weighing the Options

In groups, participants were asked to identify potential pros and cons of leasing and selling the land. Below is a summary of their insights.

## Pros of Leasing

Participants agreed that leasing keeps the property in the public hands while generating long-term revenue. Leasing offers long-term flexibility but requires the District to remain involved in operations and management. Below are some key points noted in the discussion:

- **Long-term revenue and public oversight**  
Leasing provides long-term revenue while keeping the property in public ownership, and it also allows for hybrid agreements such as revenue-sharing. These tools help the District maintain control and adapt the site as community needs change.
- **Flexibility to respond to future needs**  
A leased site can be adapted over time, giving the District the ability to adjust land uses as community needs change. This flexibility helps support long-term planning.
- **Strengthening partnerships and community services**  
Leasing supports collaboration (such as with First Nations, nonprofits, Island Health, etc) by enabling affordable or reduced cost space for medical and community cost space for medical and community serving organizations.

## Cons of Leasing

Leasing places ongoing responsibility on the District through maintenance, operations, and property management and requires time, expertise, and financial resources. Leasing can introduce political and financial risk which can complicate decision making and require the balancing of public priorities with contractual obligations. The following key points were noted:

- **Ongoing operational and maintenance responsibilities**  
Leasing means the District has to be comfortable with maintaining the property, including maintenance and day-to-day operations. These responsibilities may require hiring additional staff or building new internal capacity.
- **Limited immediate financial benefit**  
Leasing does not provide a large upfront financial return, which may limit funding available for other priority projects.
- **Balancing political pressures and operational responsibility**  
Leasing can result in the District needing to manage the political pressures of being an affordable housing operator, while also representing the community.

## Pros of Selling

Selling provides immediate funds and eliminates long-term operational responsibility. It opens the door for investment partners and allows value to be maximized through strategic planning. Selling reduces long-term control, yet it remains a practical option for supporting priority civic projects. Below are some key points:

- **Immediate financial benefit**  
Selling the land provides a one-time payment that can be used to support major community priorities. This revenue gives the District funds that can be used to support major community priorities. This revenue gives the District flexibility to fund other projects.
- **Reduced long-term responsibility and risk**  
Selling removes the District's ongoing responsibility to manage and maintain the property. It avoids long-term financial and operational risks, including future costs or market fluctuations.
- **Opportunities for investment and strategic planning**  
A sale can create opportunity for First Nations and other partners to invest in the site. This option can guide future development through land use tools like zoning or covenants.

## Cons of Selling

Selling the land provides short-term financial gain but removes public oversight and long-term flexibility. Once sold, the District cannot adapt or repurpose the site to meet future needs, which could limit future needs and opportunities for community services, housing, or healthcare.

- **Loss of long-term oversight**  
Once the land is sold, the District does not have input into how it will be used in the future (outside of zoning, covenants or other regulations).
- **Reduced flexibility for future community needs**  
Selling the site removes the District's ability to guide development or respond to community needs related to housing, healthcare, or community services longer term.
- **Risk of misalignment with community goals**  
Future uses of the land may not match what the community wants or expects long-term.

## PROS of LEASING

- revenue
- ownership
- more partnership options
- greater long-term benefits
- more long-term options
- appreciating asset

# Redevelopment of 1903 Mt Newton Cross Rd.

## Community Partner Engagement

## PROS of SELLING

- reduced liability of long-term holding
- injection of cash
- opportunity for First Nations
- options for development
- utilize land use tools

- leasing would require more operations
- ongoing costs
- political pressures
- risks of being arms'-length

## CONS of LEASING

## CONS of SELLING



- permanent decision
- no input other than land use tools