

CIVIC REDEVELOPMENT

Questions & Answers



The following FAQs respond to common questions that have been asked about the Civic Redevelopment Project since July 2024 (for previous FAQs about the project, please see LetsTalkCentralSaanich.ca/CivicRedevelopment).

1) Why isn't a part of 1903 Mt Newton Cross Road being used for the future civic building site?

1903 Mt Newton Cross Road is a rare parcel of land that's the largest site in the heart of Saanichton Village. The Official Community Plan and Saanichton Village Design Plan envision a village with more vibrant public spaces for residents to enjoy as they relax or socialize, commercial frontages that beautify and liven the village core, pedestrian and cyclist facilities that encourage active transportation, and multi-level housing to meet the most pressing housing needs in our community. This site plays a critical role in realizing that potential for the future of the Village and entire community. In addition, this site has a high land value and its use will provide an economic benefit to the community, while improving the financial model for the overall project. The District has been engaging with the community about the future of 1903 Mt Newton and will be using community input and ideas to create project direction for further community feedback.

2) Why doesn't the District rebuild of the current site (1903 Mount Newton)?

The District estimates an ability to save up to 30% on development costs by building on the Hovey Road site, and at the same time make better use of our limited land supply within the Urban Containment Boundary and create a more vibrant Saanichton Village (following further consultation with the community).

The project as envisioned will have additional and significant community benefits including:

- Exciting new opportunities for the revitalization of Saanichton Village.
- Cost savings and operations continuity related to offsite construction as relocating Police and Fire operations would be very challenging and costly.
- Increased opportunities for recreation and/or space available for community use at the Hovey Road site in a location more central to all Central Saanich residents.

Additionally, 1903 Mount Newton Cross Road aligns with our goals for a vibrant village core. This site is the largest parcel in Saanichton Village, and the District's vision includes more green spaces, gathering areas, commercial and needed amenities, and much needed multi-level housing to meet community needs. It can be zoned for higher density and is a valuable piece of property at over 4 acres in size. This site is key to the success of the project financially and it also offers long-term economic benefits to the community through tax revenue.

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3) What will the development of the Mt Newton site look like?

As the site is the largest in Saanichton Village and is located in the core, there are elements of the redevelopment that are priorities based in the Official Community Plan and Saanichton Village Design Plan. The District sought the community's input from July to October 2024 during the public consultation on the redevelopment, as well. Those elements are:

1. Housing
2. Greenspace
3. Restaurant/cafe
4. Medical/dental
5. Childcare

(See the What We Heard report from Oct 2024 at LetsTalkCentralSaanich.ca/CivicRedevelopment)

Once Council determines direction for the site, the vision will be part of the next phase of public engagement (early 2025); following public input, a publicly available formal document requesting development proposals (Request for Proposal) will outline the project's requirements, scope, and criteria for selection, and allow any interested parties to submit their proposals detailing how they would meet the project's needs and their proposed solutions. The District expects a successful proponent to present multiple concepts to the public in 2025 for input before a sale is finalized. This process would also include a rezoning, as the property is currently zoned Institutional, which would include an OCP amendment and public hearing.

4) What will this project cost tax payers? Do we have room to take out more debt?

The District has set out to ensure the Civic Redevelopment project has minimal impact on taxpayers. This was one of the main reasons the lot on Hovey Road was acquired—it is much more affordable to build on bare land outside the Village core than to rebuild at 1903 Mt Newton.

Because 1903 Mt Newton Cross Road is prime real estate in the heart of Saanichton, if it is rezoned from Institutional to a combined commercial and residential use, it will have significant land value and therefore the sale of this property will offset a substantial amount of the project cost.

Financial strategy

Because this project was identified as coming due almost 20 years ago, we are in a strong financial position based on the following actions over the past decade.

In 2017 the District implemented an *Asset Management Plan* (updated 2022) and adopted financial strategies to increase funding to targeted levels for future replacement of our aging infrastructure, which includes the facilities in discussion. An "Infrastructure and Debt Levy" was added to taxes and will contribute towards the funding required. It is forecasted that the annual funding in 2027 from this plan could fund about \$20M of debt for the facilities. The District has the capacity to take out more debt, however, depending on the District's future debt requirements, obtaining \$20M of debt may require elector approval.

The District will be actively exploring opportunities around capital reserves, District-owned land, partnerships, grants and more. Property taxes will be a piece of the puzzle, but we plan for it to be a small piece. The full financial details of the project will be determined alongside concepts and shared in early 2025.

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5) What is happening with the Municipal Yard redevelopment?

The Municipal Yard, at 1703 Keating Cross Road is also past its useful life; the main building was built in 1973 and no longer functions efficiently as operations have long outgrown the building. In addition, the building has seismic and accessibility deficiencies and does not meet post-disaster standards.

The site is larger than is needed and is 'industrial' designated land, which is currently in high demand and of high value. The property has more land than required and unused market potential. We are looking at the best way forward to complete the redevelopment of the Municipal Yard with the optimal financial outcome for taxpayers. The District is looking at rezoning it 'light industrial' (I-1 instead of the current I-2 zoning) as it is a suitable use, and there are synergies with other adjacent lands, including the Butler pit, which are seeking a light industrial zoning, as well. This will enable the District to complete a comprehensive analysis of the west section of the Keating Business District, and, if the area was to transition to light industrial, a coordinated installation of site servicing, storm water management, road access and frontage improvements, active transportation enhancements, and overall site design could be planned.

6) What will the development of the Hovey site look like?

The District is in the process of hiring an architect to design concepts that will be presented to the community in early 2025 for input. The municipal building will include offices, a police and fire station, and potentially community amenity space. The site fronts onto the District's largest multi-use park and any buildings must respect that and shouldn't detract from the park's natural and outdoor aesthetics. The District asked the public to weigh in on priorities for the community amenity space and heard that the most important amenities to try and include were:

1. Recreation
2. Plaza/courtyard/greenspace/public space
3. Community space for rental
4. Childcare
5. Small-scale food service

(See the What We Heard report from Oct 2024 at LetsTalkCentralSaanich.ca/CivicRedevelopment)

7) What land options were considered for the municipal facility site?

The District looked at all District-owned land, as well as other parcels. This included, but was not limited to Fire Station 1 on Keating; Municipal Yard site on Keating and Municipal Hall, Police and Fire Station on Mount Newton.

These and other options were not the best choice because they were not in the Urban Containment Boundary, not central enough for emergency response, or were of too high land value to be feasible. (The Urban Containment Boundary ensures development is focused in areas that make sense for the community. It helps protect and enhance the rural and small-town character of Central Saanich. About 18% of the land in Central Saanich is in the boundary.)

A summary of this land analysis and the District's Feasibility Study is available at LetsTalkCentralSaanich.ca/CivicRedevelopment it includes an overview of the District parcels

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8) Can you share the Feasibility Study?

In 2020, Central Saanich Council included a site feasibility study in the Strategic Plan to look at high-level options for replacing the aging facilities, and it was completed in 2023.

The study looked at the rough costs of redeveloping a civic facility with space for Municipal Hall, Fire Station #2 and the Police Service and also an option to add space for recreation or community amenities. The study includes confidential municipal property land assessments and values and preliminary footprint scenarios that were only used for financial estimating. It looked at the most cost-effective way to redevelop not just the services currently located at 1903 Mt Newton Cross Road, but also the Municipal Yard. This was done while keeping in mind the need to reimagine Saanichton Village for the future and the critical role 1903 Mt Newton Cross Road, the largest lot in the Saanichton core, plays in the village's future.

The District is limited in what information can be shared with the public because the Feasibility Study contains preliminary information and potential land purchase prices that could impact land values. However, the District can share that the analysis of all possible locations was based on financial feasibility and supporting the following Official Community Plan's Fundamental Principles:

- Use limited land supply wisely
- Facilitate a sense of community
- Maintain rural character
- Manage growth carefully
- Provide a range of housing opportunities
- Create walkable neighbourhoods
- Address the causes and impacts of climate change
- Support economic development
- Protect and enhance the environment, biodiversity and natural ecosystems
- Protect water quantity and quality
- Support agriculture (prioritize development within the Urban Containment Boundary)

In addition, the land analysis looked for bare land that made financial sense as well as being within the Urban Containment Boundary and not in the Agricultural Land Reserve; this was the process that identified Hovey Road Lot A as the only piece of suitable bare land that met the criteria.

A summary of the feasibility study can be found on the Let's Talk site.

9) Why is the Feasibility Study not available to the public?

The Feasibility Study was one of the documents Council received that informed their decision to proceed with the civic facilities on Hovey Lot A. It looked at potential land options to consider, and it is substantially comprised of land details and values. The District proactively released a summary of the document on our Let's Talk website for the community to see, with sections related to private property removed as this could impact those property owners, and the potential future negotiating power of the District.

A member of the public made a request for the document through the legislated process under the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FOI request). Through that process, certain

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information can be withheld – or “redacted”. The request was reviewed and prepared by legal counsel, not District staff, and the redactions are governed under the Act; they included:

- Disclosures would be harmful to the business interests of a third party (s. 21)
- Disclosures would be harmful to the financial or economic interests of the public body (s. 17)
- Disclosure would reveal advice or recommendations developed by or for a public body or minister
- Disclosure would reveal the substance of deliberations of a meeting held in the absence of the public (s. 12 (3)(b))

A member of the public who has received records under an FOI request, including how a local government severed or “redacted” the records, is able to request a review by the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner. They have the authority to review the handling of the request by a local government to ensure that the applicant receives all the information they are entitled to under legislation.

10) Is the District being sued over the Hovey Road lot?

The previous landowner waived the right to challenge the expropriation in the spring of 2024, but may challenge the amount the District paid for Hovey Road Lot A. Currently, the District has not received any notification that a challenge has been filed. If challenged, the process would follow the Court process and include legal fees in preparation for the hearing. Until such time as that process is completed, it would be difficult to estimate the costs for the defense of the District’s price. The process of the expropriation followed the *Expropriation Act*.

For background, the amount paid for the site was determined from the District’s two independent land appraisals; these were based on market value, which includes current zoning and the potential use of the land (determined by the Official Community Plan and supporting policies), and data such as current similar land sales, as required by the BC *Expropriation Act*. The final price paid to the owner for Lot A was \$4.64M. The owner obtained their own appraisal, which had a much higher value (\$7.27M) than the District appraisal. The District’s appraiser reviewed the owner’s appraisal and determined there were factors in the owner’s appraisal that resulted in it overvaluing Lot A.

11) Does the District rebuilding on Hovey mean a seniors’ care home will not be possible on the site?

A company based on the mainland, Park Place, owned two adjacent properties on Hovey—Lot A and B; they are each larger than 2 acres. Purchased almost 20 years ago, currently, neither lot is zoned for a care home. The District has acquired Lot A, and believes due to the size of Lot B (2.6 acres), a care home could be built on Lot B, if rezoning for that use was approved through a rezoning process.

12) What is post-disaster and is it necessary for the new building?

Not only is it important to provide safe buildings for our staff and the public, the District plays a key role in local emergency response, including Police, Fire, Emergency Program, Communications, Public Works, and supporting functions. It is crucial for these services to be able to respond in a ‘post-disaster’ situation. Any new civic buildings for municipal operations will be post-disaster rated as part of continuity planning to ensure services continue after an emergency.