



Pentwater Community Assessment - June 2019

The Community Assessment described herein was the first phase of the Pentwater community visioning and planning effort. This brief summary describes the process and product of the assessment, where a cross-section of community leaders and residents shared their thoughts, feelings and aspirations about Pentwater. Julie Hales-Smith, a Principal with North Coast Community Consultants (NC3), conducted the assessment and produced a report after receiving, summarizing and analyzing community feedback. Conducted on June 19, 2019, the process consisted of four focus groups with select segments of the population in the Pentwater community. The broader community was reached through two Town Hall meetings, held on June 19 and June 22, 2019.

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Focus Group #1 Downtown Business Owners: Downtown business owners said their biggest problem is trying to do business in Pentwater. The short season means that even a week of bad weather or a slight change in the school calendars can make a huge impact on sales, and many businesses can't afford to keep their doors open through winter.

Group #2 Government Officials and Appointees: These officials also bemoaned the short season which makes it impossible to attract and maintain the core services that any community would want – a drug store, medical facilities, and a grocery store. They also described the internet service as slow, inconsistent, and expensive, making it not only inconvenient but impossible for folks to work remotely.

Group #3 Marine and Lakes Recreation Parties: Housing and basic goods and services again emerged as challenges; specifically, lack of housing for young people and its impact on age diversity, and the fear that as more properties become short term rentals there will be less available to attract year round residents.

Group #4 Active Residents: Again, this group echoed the groups before them emphasizing lack of housing and basic goods and services, especially for seniors. They also want the community to be intentionally inclusive and collaborative.

Town Halls: Approximately 135 community members enthusiastically participated in the Town Hall meetings. As heard in the focus groups, the people of Pentwater see lack of adequate housing and the resulting short season and lack of goods and services as issues that affect their quality of life – they pose a threat to the community. When asked what is unique about Pentwater and what they want to preserve, many were passionate about Pentwater; and this might just be the essence – people are **passionate** about Pentwater. This passion seems to stem from “what is unique” about Pentwater - an almost magical convergence of superb natural beauty; a welcoming, safe, and warm ambience; and the legacy of Pentwater embraced in memories that they cherish. Not surprisingly, they want to preserve the “hometown atmosphere”, historical charm, and the family connectedness – essentially the qualities that make Pentwater unique.

FOCUS AREAS

- **Affordable housing.** The perception is that housing prices are inflated, perhaps due to demand. It is difficult to attract a more diverse population (such as young families) because prices are high and varieties of housing types are not available. Downsizing seniors don't have housing available that meets their particular needs.
- **Short business season.** Because the tourist season is short and the year-round community is too small, basic goods and services are not available for those who choose to live here all year.
 - Pentwater seniors are especially in need of additional resources and services in order to age in place.
 - Businesses can't operate year-round on a less than 3-month income. At the end of summer, many businesses close leaving a “ghost downtown” behind.
- **Other important items:**
 - Greater Collaboration. Need/opportunity to collaborate (service groups, all local units of government, residents) to improve and sustain quality of life in Pentwater.
 - Internet service. The current internet service causes headaches for residents and tourists alike, including prohibiting people from working remotely.

