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### AFFORDABLE HOUSING COUNCIL LAUNCHED

“Keep at it and learn as you go.” This was a key theme heard by members of the Cowichan Region’s Affordable Housing Directorate at its inaugural meeting on Thursday, October 18th.

Seventeen invited guests gathered at the Silver Bridge Inn to hear representatives of the City of Langford outline their award winning affordable housing strategy. Hosted by Social Planning Cowichan, the meeting included local planners, a realtor, and members of community service agencies with an interest in housing issues as they affect their clients.

Establishing a Cowichan Affordable Housing Directorate is one of the key recommendations in a housing report released by Social Planning Cowichan last spring. The purpose of the directorate is to develop an affordable housing strategy for the Cowichan region.

“Just like child care, we have a critical need for quality affordable housing. If people can't put a roof over their heads they can't work and ultimately that effects us all,” said Candace Spilsbury, Social Planning Cowichan board chair. “We're very pleased to learn that our report will support the Official Community Plans for Cobble Hill and Shawnigan Lake.”

Langford Councillor Lanny Seaton and Deputy City Planner, Emilie Adin encouraged participants to develop an action strategy and start the ball rolling. They attribute much of Langford's affordable housing success to the acceptance and creativity of the mayor, council and staff– and the receptivity of community developers who “stepped up to the plate. They've been really good” said Adin. “In the end, results far exceeded expectations”.

Seaton invited the group to visit Langford and challenged them to identify affordable housing from market value housing. “Even the people who live there don't know who is in affordable housing,” he said. “Residents take great pride in their homes particularly with their gardens and general upkeep.”

Seaton and Adin were quick to point out that their's is a “made in Langford” solution tailored to the municipality's unique needs. The Cowichan Region will need to develop its own strategy.

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