

CBT Biosphere Centre Development and Community Engagement

May 20, 2020



In 2019, the CBT purchased a property in Tofino for the purpose of the realizing the Biosphere Centre vision. The Centre will be a welcoming place and a community space – where residents, visitors and researchers feel equally comfortable, and where scientists and knowledge holders can share their teachings. We picture a community “living room” that brings together people, place and learning.

The creation of a permanent research and education space, along with CBT offices, archives, and residences for staff and visiting researchers has been our goal since 2008. Over the past 10 years, we’ve refined our vision based on what we’ve heard from communities, organizations, researchers, board and staff. During this time, the CBT has pursued a number of opportunities in Tofino including the purchase of the current property. CBT has also pursued a partnership with the District of Tofino (DoT) and Vancouver Island Regional Library to develop a shared space in the Tofino downtown core, but ultimately this was determined to be unachievable for the respective parties.

The CBT purchased a vacant lot at 301 Olsen Road and is excited about the opportunity to be a part of the Crab Dock neighbourhood. We feel the Olsen Road is a good fit for our multi-use, institutional building given its “unique mix of uses” as described in the Tofino Official Community Plan. The addition of the Biosphere Centre to the neighbourhood will bring further diversity and vibrancy, while maintaining and adding to the residential component of the neighbourhood.

We are now in the design phase of the Biosphere Centre project. It is vitally important that community voices continue to shape the design and use of the Biosphere Centre. As part of this commitment, the CBT has proactively created several opportunities for community members and stakeholders to provide early stage pre-development input on the building’s proposed design and use. This process included three meetings with the Olsen Road neighbours, a Virtual Open House for all community members, and an online survey.

We have worked with the feedback provided and incorporated some of the excellent suggestions into the proposed design for the building and property. Recently revisions have been made to reduce the building area, increase the northerly setback and to orient the mass of the building more towards Campbell Street.

This consultation effort is an initiative of the CBT to receive feedback prior to submitting a zoning bylaw amendment application to the DoT in early summer. If you would like to provide feedback to the CBT Board prior to our submission for rezoning, please direct your comments through Rebecca Hurwitz, executive director, at rebecca@clayoquotbiosphere.org. The CBT Board will meet on May 29th and June 18th and correspondence can be submitted one-week prior for distribution.

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The DoT zoning amendment review and approval process will also offer opportunities for community input that apply to all development applications. We encourage all community members to participate when these opportunities arise.

The development of the Biosphere Centre has been part of CBT's vision for many years and we envision it as a meeting place for the communities and people of our region for many years to come. Your input into what will be a significant regional asset is important to us. CBT is fully committed to engaging the community in a positive, constructive, respectful and collaborative manner as we do in all of our work.

Biosphere Centre Q&A

CBT hosted an online open house Tuesday and Wednesday, April 28th & 29th via online conference call (Zoom) and an online survey. The purpose of the open house and survey was to inform community members on the proposed design for the new Clayoquot Biosphere Centre at 301 Olsen Road in Tofino, as well as provide an opportunity for feedback.

1. Why does the CBT want to move from the current location?

The CBT has been leasing its current space located at 316 Main Street for over 10 years. Having outgrown its existing space, and as the mission of CBT has evolved, the current space no longer meets CBT's needs and the needs of its' community partners. We are seeking a sustainable permanent home from which we can continue to develop our programs, foster innovation and welcome the community long into the future.

2. Why did the CBT purchase this site?

The CBT has explored several other sites throughout the region and had difficulty finding one that would meet its long term needs with land not being readily available. In previous efforts the CBT has explored working with the DoT and Vancouver Island Regional Library to develop a shared space, but due to other priorities of the stakeholders, this option could not be pursued in the foreseeable future.

Tla-o-qui-aht First Nations has invited the CBT to continue to locate the Biosphere Centre in their territory. The Olsen Road property is located along Campbell Street - the main road into Tofino. It has high visibility and accessibility for people from all communities served by CBT, including those who may come via boat. Located immediately on the multi-purpose path and on the future public transit route, this site is well positioned for allowing people to come to the Centre on foot, by bike or by public transportation.

The institutional and residential uses proposed by the CBT have the potential to fit well with other mixed use properties along Campbell Street and Olsen Rd.

3. What stage of the process is the project at?

The CBT has conducted community consultation with key stakeholders at its own initiative to garner feedback and support for the design. The team is currently preparing a rezoning bylaw amendment application. This application will be reviewed by the DoT and will go through a minimum of 4 hearings at Council plus a public open house prior to a potential zoning bylaw amendment approval.

4. What type of zoning will be applied to the site?

The zoning amendment process will consider a Comprehensive Development (CD) site specific zone for the property that reflects the specific uses that the CBT is proposing - institutional and residential use. There are no commercial uses proposed by CBT for the property now or in the future.

5. How was the size of the Biosphere Centre determined?

The planning for the Biosphere Centre Functional Program is based on workspace for staff, community meeting and teaching kitchen space, as well as two modest residential units to support affiliated programs and respond directly to community need. Conditions are estimated to 10 years beyond an estimated occupancy of 2023. This planning horizon has been utilized to ensure the Biosphere Centre meets the operational needs of the CBT well into the future.

6. What types of uses will be included in the Centre?

The Centre will include the following uses:

- CBT office space including a meeting room and co-working space + flex office
- An Elder's room, community meeting space (40-person capacity) and teaching kitchen
- Service & support space
- 2 residential units

7. How big is the proposed design?

- Number of stories: 3
- Gross building area: 871 sm
- Footprint (largest floorplate): 435 sm
- Floor Space Ratio: 0.998
- Site area: 872.9 sm
- Site Coverage: 49.8%

8. What is the estimated building capacity?

On a daily basis, between 15-16 people and up to 4 people in the residences. The community meeting space has up to a 40-person capacity, which might occur 1x per month. Most often the community meeting space will be used in a smaller configuration of 15-20 people.

9. How many parking spots are allocated for the project?

The design provides 9 stalls on the property, which is in excess of the DoT's requirements.

10. What is the contingency for overflow parking?

CBT is currently considering all modes of arrival to the site, including on foot, by bicycle, via the bus service that is planned, an event specific shuttle, and carpooling in addition to arriving by individual car. For the more significant events, proactive planning will be necessary to accommodate parking – utilizing existing surface lots within Tofino – and potential shared use agreements with the adjacent land neighbours.

11. Do the neighbours support this project?

The CBT continues to engage with the Crab Dock neighbours. Some of the residents have expressed concern regarding the scale of the proposed building and the additional activity this will bring to the

top of Olsen Rd. The design has been modified following our initial consultation to address some of these concerns as well as consider other constructive feedback from the community.

12. For visiting researchers, would there be useable space beyond office space? Project storage or dry/wet lab space?

There is a flex office and co-working space. Research storage and community use storage are being planned. A lab is currently not part of the space program – but CBT would be interested to know more about this requirement to better evaluate if this would be an important piece to include.

13. Where is the library /archives?

The Archives are currently connected directly to the CBT open office spaces. The design considers it as an open space with ample storage of files, books and other material that make up the collection.

COMMENTS & SUGGESTIONS

1. “I love how much space is made for the needs of Elders, space for generative dialogue and community building projects. I could see using this as an educational space with NIC. A dream I have is to have a safe space for youth in town – any way this may be a part of the vision here as well?”
2. “Include native edibles and food growing garden boxes and benches on the large south facing terrace”
3. “Explore potential for fire pit/outdoor ceremonial space”
4. “Could consider more protection to the entrances for the residences”
5. “I really like the option for a visiting researcher to use some office space and the large open meeting space.”
6. “For outdoor vegetation cover, it would be great to have a diversity of native species. I am also thinking it’d be great to have a herbarium as part of the archives!”
7. “I love the design – big fan of the modern look – wondering if overhangs on the roof were considered for the weather/rain?”
8. “Is there a way to prevent bird collisions with all the large windows?”
9. “Include design of a wildlife resistant garbage, composting and recycling area/structure”
10. “Provide options for storage for the long-term rentals to help avoid resident’s belongings outside the building. Most residents have bikes, surfboards, etc., and a 600sqft house may not allow for storage of all that inside.”

Thank you to all who have participated and taken the time to provide such thoughtful feedback to this design process. All of these comments and suggestions will be thoughtfully considered as the project moves forward into more detailed design phases in the future.