

PORT OF POTENTIAL

PORT ALICE'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Community Workshop Report September 29, 2015



Table of Contents

1. Event Overview	3
2. Presentation.....	5
3. Activity stations – Key Findings	12
4. Activity Stations – Detailed Results.....	13
5. Next Steps	20

Prepared by:



p. 604-228-1855
w. www.ecoplan.ca

Name that Plan!

At the event (and during pre-interviews) community members were asked what they wanted to name this plan.

About 20 ideas were put forward, and the community voted on the names using electronic voting devices at the September 29th workshop.

The winning name was ‘Port of Potential’ put forward by Trish Weatherall. Nice work Trish!

1. Event Overview

On September 29, 2015, Port Alice hosted a Community Workshop on Economic Development at the Community Centre. Technical support, design and facilitation were provided by EcoPlan International (EPI) and the Port Alice Economic Development Steering Committee.¹

Approximately 65 people attended. This event built on the feedback gathered through 45 interviews and surveys with community members prior to the workshop.

The goals at this event were to:

- Present background information about the current state of the economy and the community of Port Alice
- Confirm the community objectives for economic development
- Get feedback on action ideas that had been proposed so far
- Generate new action ideas
- Discuss implementation (i.e., how will we make sure the actions in this plan actually get done?)

The event ran from 4-7 pm, with a presentation from 5:30 to 6:30 pm. The rest of the time was spent circulating among 13 posters hung on the walls, many of which were 'interactive', in that community members could provide their input and feedback on the posters using sticky notes or dots. Port Alice residents had lots of ideas to contribute, and the posters were full with comments by the end of the evening!

The day after the event, **the students from the older grades at Seaview School** came and reviewed the posters and provided their comments as well. Their comments are included in here with the adults' comments.

-
- ¹ Mayor Jan Allen, Committee Chair
 - Madeline McDonald, CAO
 - Local Business: Bill Feader Jr, Manager FP Foods
 - Local Business Alternate: Bill Feader Sr, Owner, FP Foods & Brooks Bay Cable
 - Forestry: Jon Flintoft, Sr Operations Planner, Western Forest Products
 - Forestry Alternate: Vince Devlin, Jeune Landing Manager
 - Cheryl McLay Regional Manager Vancouver Island/Coast Region, Ministry of JTST
 - Karen Lachman, Regional Manager, Northern Vancouver Island, Ministry of JTST
 - David Mitchell, General Manager of Community Futures Mount Waddington
 - Pat English, Manager of Economic Development



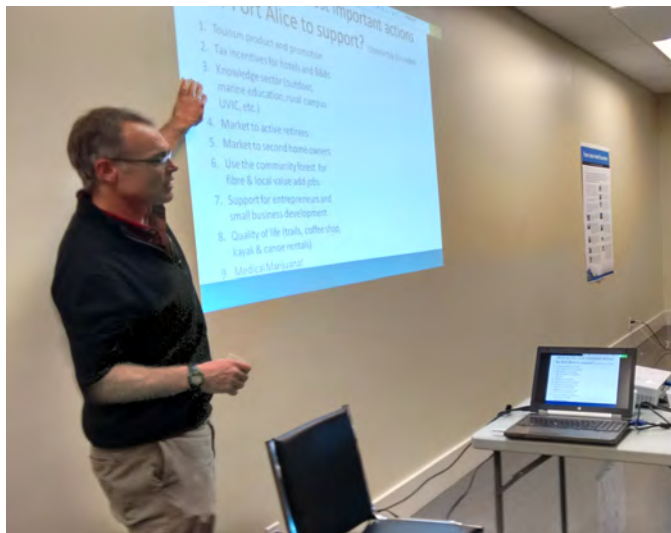
2. Presentation

The presentation was interactive, and participants could respond to questions by using remote control clickers, or 'Automated Response Devices'. Using this system, a series of questions was asked, which included:

- Demographic questions to gain an understanding of who was in the room, and allow for more detailed analysis of the results
- Questions about overall plan direction – what are the main objectives for the plan?
- Questions about controversial topics that came up during the 45 pre-interviews and surveys.

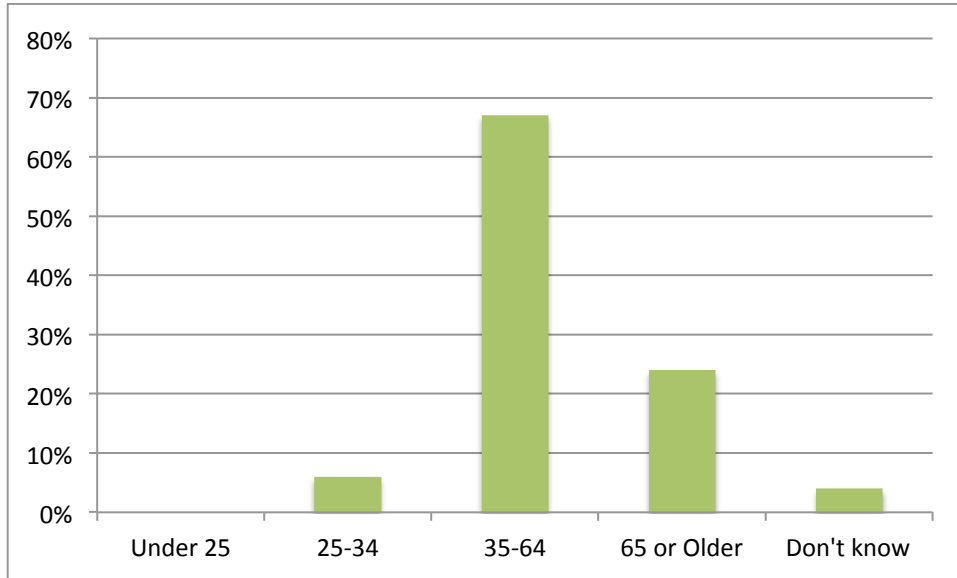
The questions and responses are shown below. Here are some of the key results:

- The crowd in attendance was mostly between 35 and 64, was majority female, and was mostly employed full-time or retired.
- The main objectives for economic development were to attract more families/youth, more businesses, and more jobs.
- Over half of the attendees were very committed to Port Alice ("I'd stay no matter what!")

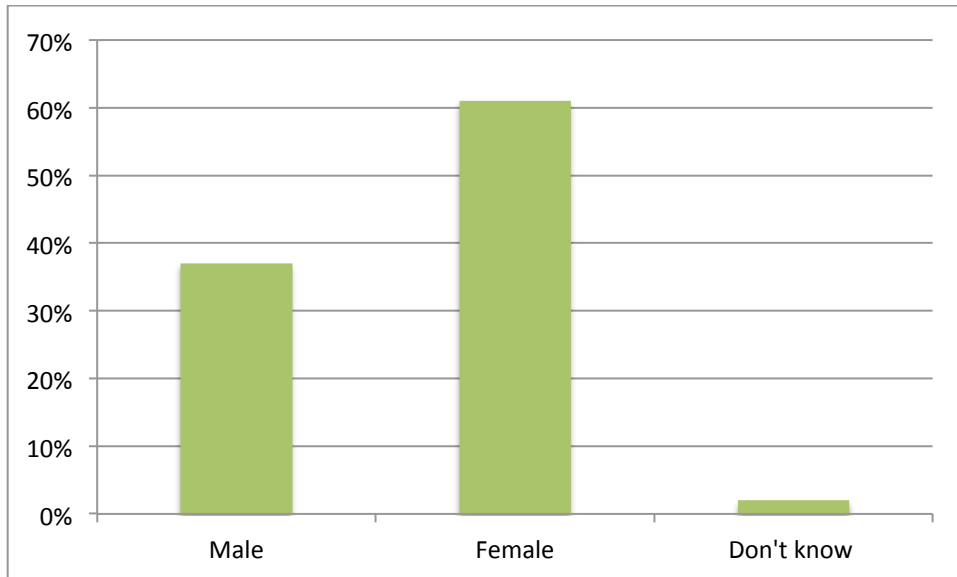


QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

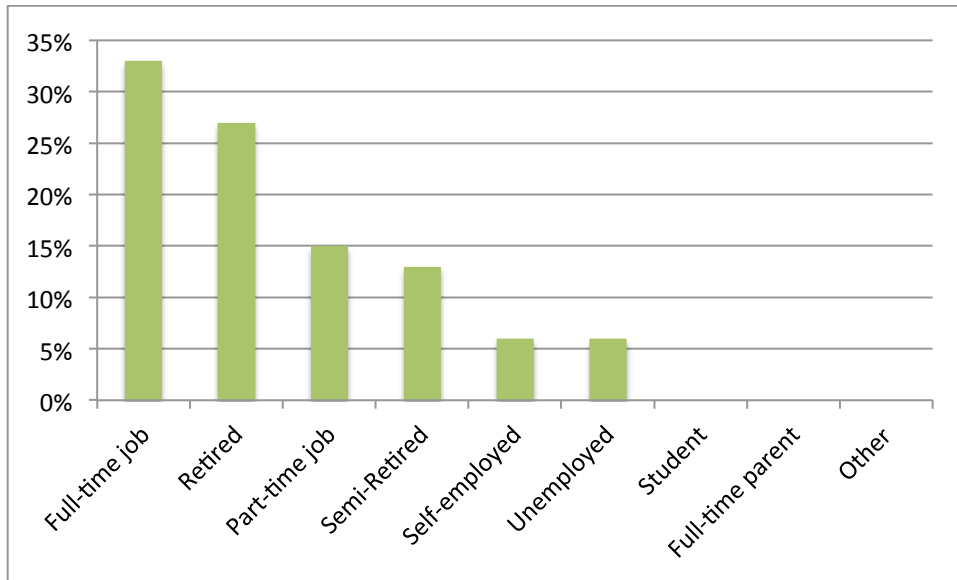
What is your age?



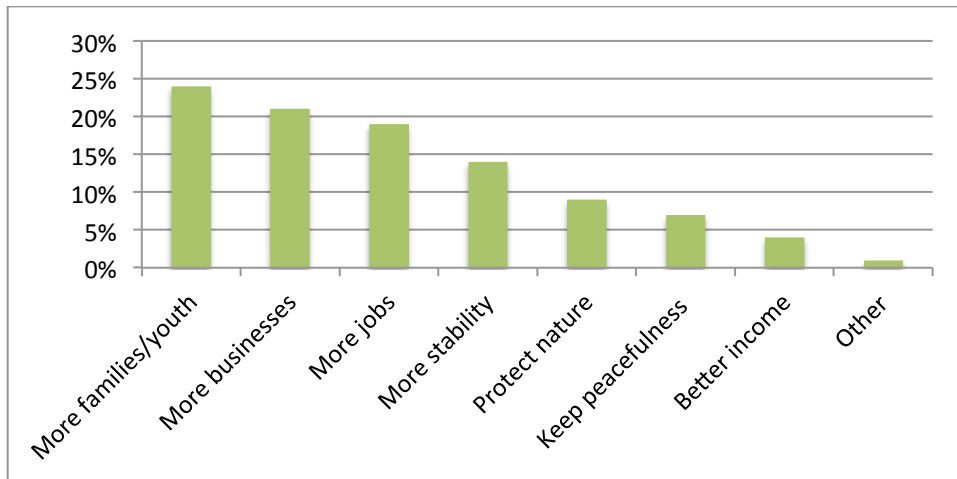
What is your gender?



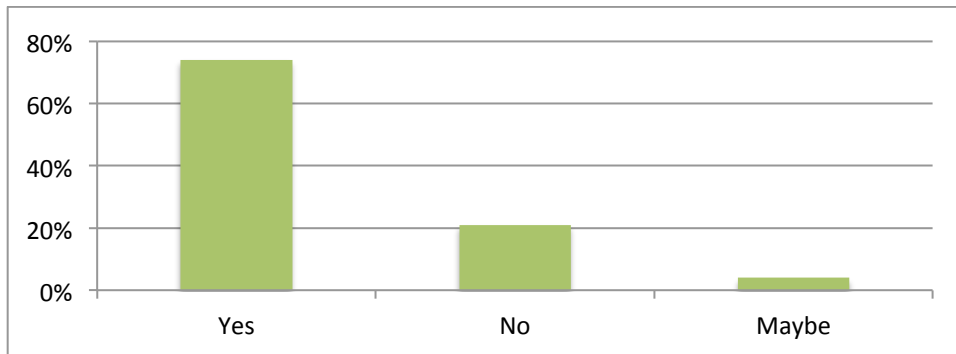
What best describes your work situation?



Your objectives: Where do we have the most opportunities for positive gains? (Choose top 3 in order of importance)

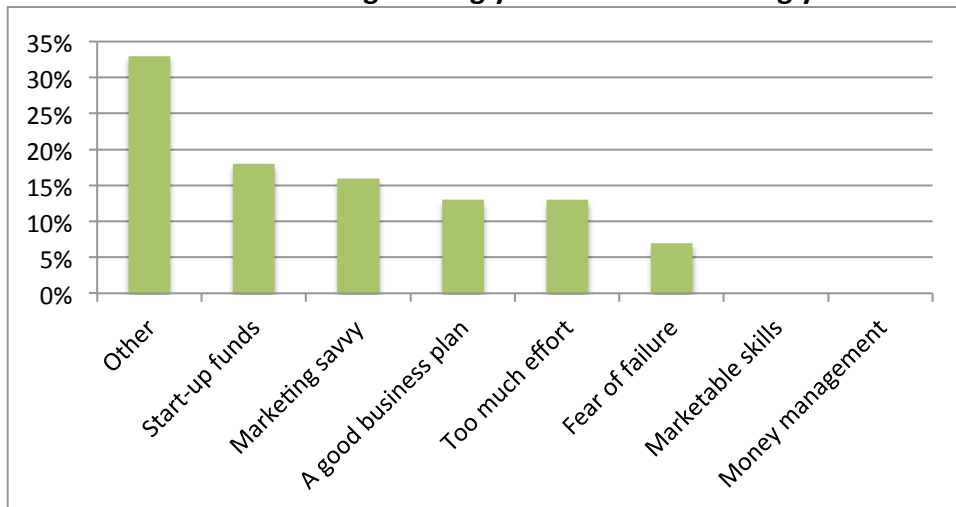


Have you ever thought about starting your own business? Even a small one? Even just one person?



A lot of people in the room were surprised when this answer was shown on the PowerPoint screen. The actual rate of self-employment in Port Alice is not known, but 10% of people in the Regional District of Mount Waddington were self-employed (2011). This means there is a huge pool of people in Port Alice who could potentially start businesses.

What would be the #1 thing holding you back from starting your own business?

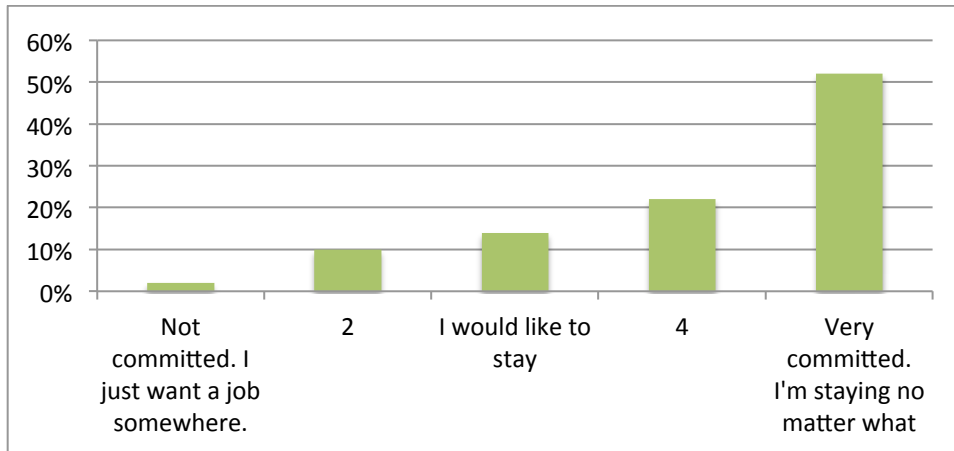


After asking this question, we asked people to write down what 'other' factor is holding them back, and the following answers were given:

- Too much red-tape with local government
- (Hard to) Leave a full-time job to start small seasonal business...
- Lack of viable options due to low population

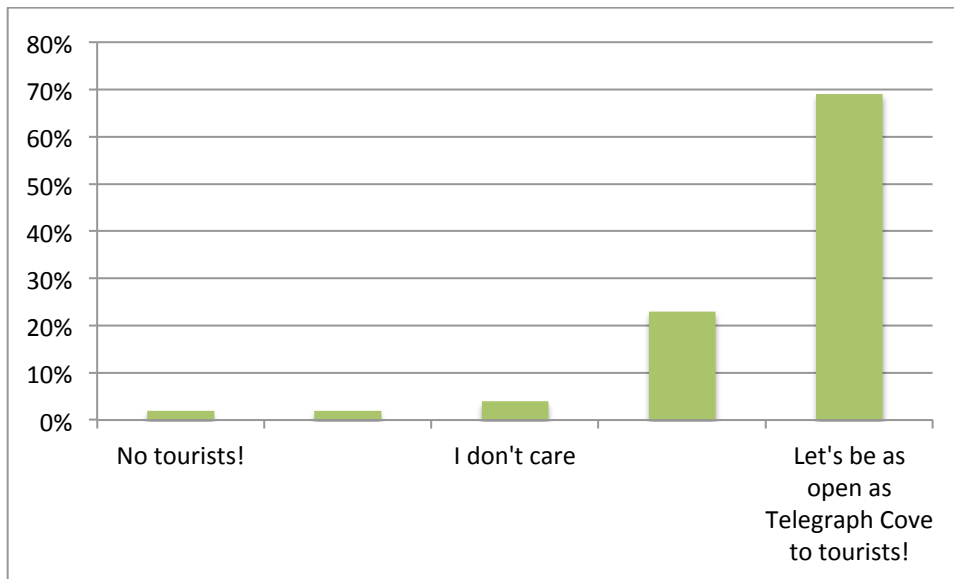
A representative from Community Futures Mount Waddington was in attendance, and he pointed out that Community Futures can help with start up funds (loans), access to grants, mentorship and coaching – helping to overcome many of the barriers listed in this question!

How committed are you to Port Alice?



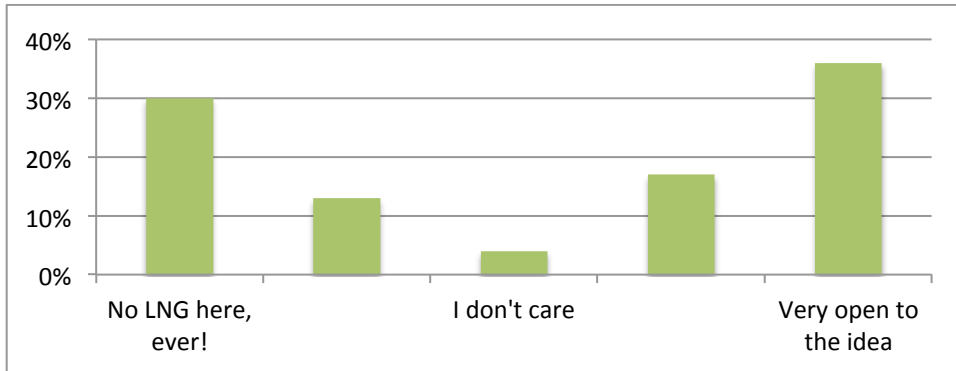
When the results from this question were presented on the slide, a workshop attendee pointed out that the people in the room were not likely representative of the whole community (after all, they came out this event, and were likely more committed than average). So it's likely that that community as a whole might be slightly less committed to Port Alice. Intercept interviews around town (i.e., talking to people on the street and in stores) seemed to confirm this view.

How open are you to tourism?



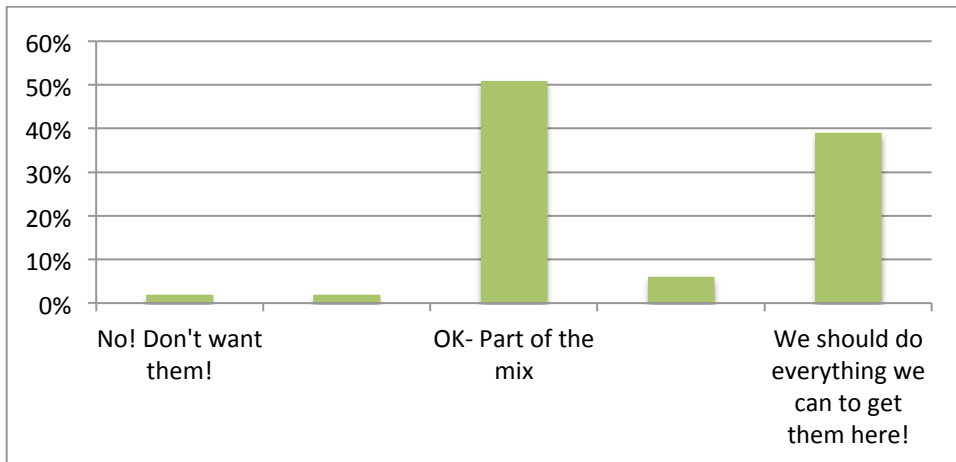
This result was somewhat surprising. The 45 pre-interviews had revealed a great diversity of views on tourism, many of them negative. Perhaps workshop participants have had a chance to think more about the topic and changed their mind, after thinking about what other options are available.

How open are you to an LNG facility or other new industrial development in Port Alice (in theory)?



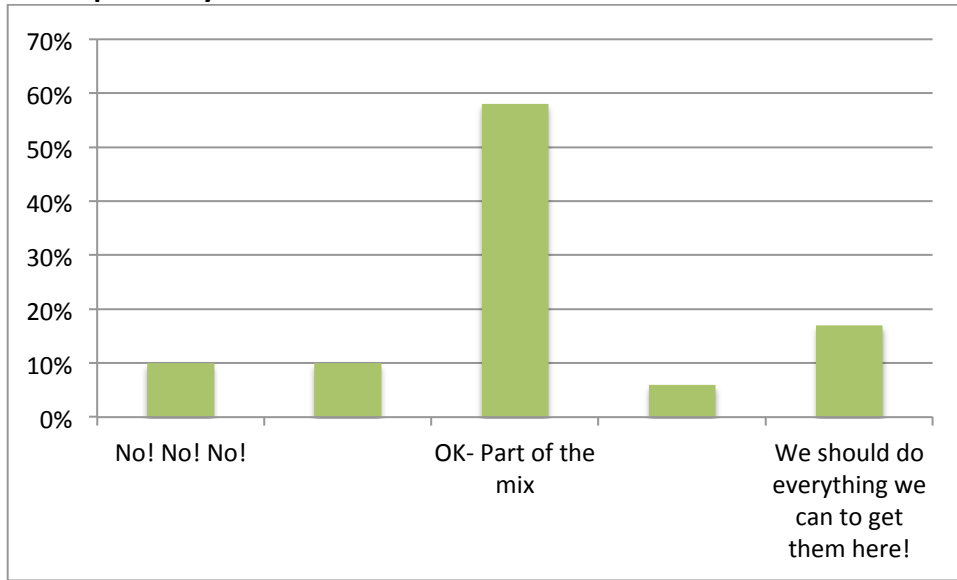
At this point in time, this is a hypothetical question posed by several Port Alice residents, as there is no imminent LNG facility proposed for Port Alice. In some ways, it serves as a proxy for industrial development in general. It is an interesting result as it shows an almost even split in the community. This suggests that if an LNG or other industrial project were proposed for Port Alice, there would need to be a well-considered engagement with the community.

How open are you to retirees? (Specifically, to attracting retirees to Port Alice)



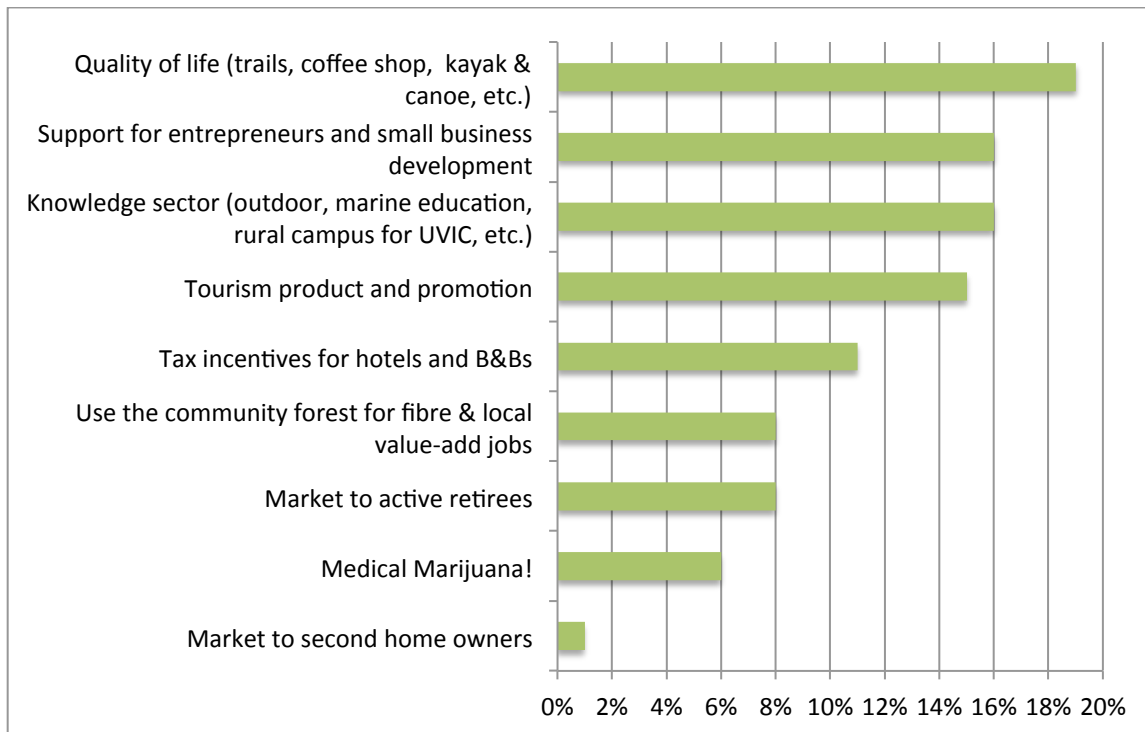
The results from this question suggest that Port Alice residents would be open (in general) to attracting retirees to the community. Given the assets and resources in the community, it would most likely appeal to younger, more active retirees.

How open are you to second homeowners?



The next question asked people to rate a list of actions that came up during pre-interviews. Many more options were put forward throughout the evening as well.

What are the most important actions for Port Alice to support?



3. Activity stations – Key Findings

There were 13 posters and activities spread throughout the room. Posters included:

- *What's happening?* (An introductory poster)
- *Port Alice today*- this gave us a snapshot of the community and some interesting facts.
- *What happened to our previous economic plans?*- this poster described some of our previous economic plans and highlighted their key recommendations and progress towards these goals.
- *Economic Development 101*- this poster described the 3 main ways to improve local economies.
- *Fresh ideas from elsewhere*- Port Alice's situation is not unique. This poster outlined some interesting ideas that have been successful in other small communities struggling with temporary or permanent closures in the resource sector.
- *Imagine a world*- The following posters set us up for some scenario-building exercises where we looked at two alternative futures.
 - *Scenario 1- Mill reopens soon*- the next two posters began by imagining what this scenario might look like and led us through actions that helped plan for this possibility.
 - *Scenario 2-Mill does not reopen soon*- the next two posters began by imagining what this scenario might look like and led us through actions that helped plan for this possibility.
- *Who wants to start a business?* This poster highlighted business ideas from the community, and asked people how Port Alice can stimulate more entrepreneurship.
- *Getting it done* How do we turn our idea into reality? This poster focused on how we can make our actions real.
- *Name that plan-Win a Prize*

Some posters were purely informative, while others asked questions and guided participants through various activities. (All posters are available for review on the Village of Port Alice website at <http://portalice.ca/businesses/planning-development>.)

Some overall themes came up often throughout the activities. These included:

- The need to carry on with the plan, even if the mill opens soon.
- That the actions in the plan should be the same/similar regardless of if the mill reopens soon or not.

4. Activity Stations – Detailed Results

Results for posters that had interactive elements are described here. Participants were tasked with providing two types of responses. First, some questions on the posters asked participants to supply suggestions or comments on sticky notes. Second, participants were provided with green and red dots and asked to vote both on other participants' responses and on suggestions pre-supplied by workshop organizers on the posters.

****Note:** In the results detailed below, participant responses that are followed with a number and “green” or “red” indicate whether and how many other participants voted in favour or against the response or activity suggestion. Green signifies that others were in favour while red signifies that others were against the response or action suggestion.

A few comments were, unfortunately, unreadable.



What happened to our previous economic plans?

In addition to providing information on the progress made on past plans, this poster also asked participants “What can we learn from these experiences?”

Answers are shown below (note that there were over a dozen responses to this poster, but most comments were actually action ideas. Because of this, they have been moved to the ‘actions’ posters later on).

- We need to come up with a plan and stick to it.

Imagine a world...where the mill reopens soon

This station was the first of two ‘scenarios’ that asked participants to put themselves several years in the future and ‘imagine a world’. At this station, participants were asked to imagine that the mill reopened soon. Some details on this scenario were provided, like the fact that employment at the mill would likely decrease by 10-20% due to facility upgrades.

Vision for this scenario

The first poster in this station showed a fictitious newspaper headline from 5 years in the future, and asked people to fill in the text of the article.

The headline read “Port Alice turns economy around!”, and people’s responses are shown below:

- More small business support. - 1 green

What actions should we take in this scenario?

The second poster for this scenario activity asked participants the following question: *What actions do you think the municipality should take to improve our local economy in a future where the mill reopens?* A variety of economic actions were suggested on the poster, and participants were asked to vote on their favourites. The different actions are provided below and are ranked from most popular to least popular.

Action Planning: If the mill reopens soon (Scenario 1)	
Action	Sum of Votes (green votes minus red votes)
Canoe rentals and kayak rentals at marina and Alice lake (operated by the Village)	15
Faster internet (already in progress)	9
Predator interpretation centre using Ecological Trust funds	8
Support the development of an outdoor school (sailing, kayaking, marine education, field school for UVIC, etc.)	8
Ongoing conversations with core service providers (RCMP, bank, Post Office, Health Centre) to stay on top of their needs and future plans	7
Tax incentives for hotel and Bed & Breakfast accommodations (to incentivize upgrades or new facilities)	7
Market to retirees (including the parents of people already living on the North Island)	7
Wider marketing of Port Alice online (Hello BC, AHOY BC, etc.)	6
Fishing derby	6
Saturday market	4
Take another look at the community forest as a way to provide local jobs and fibre	4

Training and capacity building – computer skills, life skills, administration	3
Market storm watching in the winters	2
Lobby for more government services (e.g., coast guard facility, navy outpost)	2
Business retention and expansion program (i.e., ongoing conversations with business owners to see what support they need)	2
Offer workshops on how to start Bed & Breakfasts	1
Bigger boat slips	1
Workshop to train homeowners about how to rent out their house responsibly and safely (e.g., how to choose good renters, how to avoid property damage)	1
Encourage larger companies in our area to source products and services locally	1
Support the development of an LNG production facility at Port Alice (using deep water access, potentially run-of-river power)	0
Work with provincial and federal governments to provide homes/support to refugees here in Port Alice (NOTE this was divisive, with four green votes and eight red ones)	-4

Participants were also asked to make their own suggestions for actions taken in the event of the mill reopening soon. Their suggestions are below (in their own words):

- Motorcycle Touring, including promotion of the ‘Dragons tail’ (the Port Alice Highway). “Dare to ride the Dragon Tail”. – 2 green
- If the mill reopens, the shifts have to make it so there is an incentive to stay and live and keep your family here. – 2 green
- Promote the town in *tourism* magazines. – 2 green
- Promote tourism in *recreation* magazines. – 1 green
- Better communication with the mill. – 1 green
- Permit yard sales.... (*note that Port Alice does actually permit yard sales*).
- Mill produce power. Mill in Hinton, AB powers mill and town.
- Village can start a nice campground, promote it well.

Imagine a world...where the mill does NOT reopen soon

Similar to the *Scenario 1* activity, the first poster for this scenario activity asked participants imagine what a future newspaper article from September 2020 would write about how Port Alice had turned its economy around despite the *mill's closure*. Participants gave the following responses:

- Supporting local families through tough economic times – 1 green
- Diversification – Working together.
- Tourism = necessary.
- Stay positive!

The second poster for this scenario activity asked participants the following question: *What actions do you think that the municipality should take to improve our local economy in a future where the mill does not reopen?*

Again, similar to *Scenario 1*, a variety of economic actions were suggested on the poster, and participants were asked to vote on their favourites. The different actions are provided below and are ranked from most popular to least popular.

Action Planning: if mill does NOT reopen soon (Scenario 2)	
Action	Sum of Votes (green votes minus red votes)
Faster internet (already in progress)	9
Support the development of an outdoor school (sailing, kayaking, marine education, field school for UVIC, etc.)	6
Market storm watching in the winters	4
Wider marketing of Port Alice online (Hello BC, AHOY BC, etc.)	4
Promote industrial tourism (of the mill site, etc.)	4
Saturday market	4
Market to retirees (including the parents of people already living on the North Island)	4
Fishing derby	3
Canoe rentals and kayak rentals at marina and Alice lake (operated by the Village)	3
Ongoing conversations with core service providers (RCMP, bank, Post Office, Health Centre) to stay on top of their needs and future plans	3
Predator interpretation centre using Ecological Trust funds	2
Bigger boat slips	2
Tax incentives for hotel and Bed & Breakfast accommodations (to incentivize upgrades or new facilities)	1

Offer workshops on how to start Bed & Breakfasts	1
Training and capacity building – computer skills, life skills, administration	1
Lobby for more government services (e.g., coast guard facility, navy outpost)	0
Workshop to train homeowners about how to rent out their house responsibly and safely (e.g., how to choose good renters, how to avoid property damage)	0
Take another look at the community forest as a way to provide local jobs and fibre	0
Business retention and expansion program (i.e., ongoing conversations with business owners to see what support they need)	0
Encourage larger companies in our area to source products and services locally	0
Work with provincial and federal governments to provide homes/support to refugees here in Port Alice	0
Support the development of an LNG production facility at Port Alice (using deep water access, potentially run-of-river power)	-1

Participants were also asked to make their own suggestions for actions taken in the event that the mill does NOT reopen soon. Their suggestions are below (in their own words):

- Start a hockey school. Attract some of the local NHL players for support. – 2 greens
- Vegetable greenhouse / community gardens – 2 greens
- Re: retiree attraction. Market to active, younger retirees. But you have to go to *them* (e.g. trade shows, etc). Ads won't work. - 1 green
- More festivals and cultural events (i.e. music, art, food?) - 1 green
- Marijuana growing operation (*one person suggested using the arena*) - 1 green
- Food bank. – 1 green
- Collective kitchens. – 1 green
- Weekly transportation to Port Hardy / Port McNeill
- Advertise and lure small businesses from metro areas whose employees can't afford housing down there.
- Market single family detached homes that are affordable.
- Shell fish farm. Scallops, oysters, mussels.
- Sawmill to square logs before shipping over seas.
- Could anything be done locally to add value to our forestry products? A sawmill, for example.
- Pellet plant. Clean up waste wood on clear-cut.
- Support the development of more hotels and bed & breakfasts.

- Get major hotel chain to build here. Bring in tours.
- Clean up hotel. Nowhere to stay. Won't come here.
- Drug and alcohol rehab centre.
- Perhaps a fish hatchery.
- Oceanside RV Park.
- People can apply for loans from Community Futures.
- Teach care-aid course.
- Change the services sign that is next to the Port Alice sign on the Highway.
- Store front for local artisans to show their wares. Could be run by volunteers.
- Slimming, high-end week long weight loss retreats.
- Purify water from Eternal Fountain. Bottle and export.
- Boatlift in conjunction with marina.
- "Alone" series and expand on it.
- Comments from Seaview School students. These are not normally separated out in this report, but some were quite different from the adults' comments on this poster, so they have been presented separately:
 - A bike shop.
 - Starbucks/Tim Horton's/McDonalds.
 - Clothing stores (Old Navy, Ardenes).

Who wants to start a business?

This poster provided a list of all the business ideas that had been forward so far during this project. These ranged from 'sports bar' to 'accountant' to 'chimney sweep'. The purpose of this poster was to move the conversation beyond simply listing the businesses that people wanted to see, to actually thinking about how to encourage people to start businesses.

The poster asked two questions:

What is holding back you or other Port Alice residents from starting a business?

- Lack of viable options due to low population - 1 green
- Too much red-tape with local government
- (Hard to) Leave full-time job to start small seasonal business...
- Money
- Lack of prime empty lots

What can the Village of Port Alice do to support residents who want to start businesses?

- Somehow emphasize the importance of shopping locally. Work more on convincing people to buy gas and groceries, etc. here. - 1 green

- More incentive locally to start a business. First year break on utilities? Free business license?

Getting it done

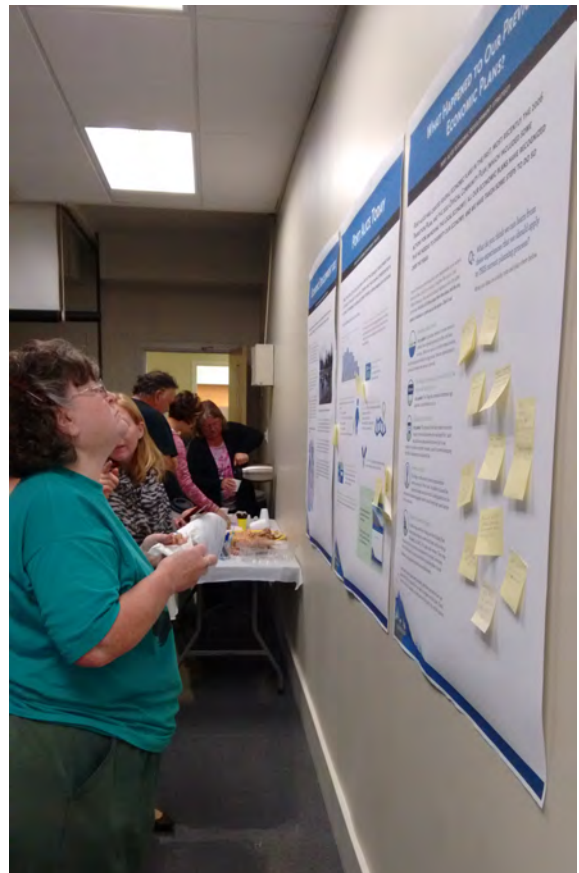
Finally, the last poster station asked participants what they could do to support Port Alice's local economy. There were two questions.

What actions can residents and businesses (i.e. YOU!) take to support our local economy?

- Shop locally. – 4 green
- Support other businesses. – 4 green
- Networking. – 1 green
- Start a business! Buy an existing business! Come and see Community Futures! – 1 green
- Call centre.
- Open at least one restaurant.

Lots of plans get made, but never implemented. What can we do to make sure that THIS plan actually gets implemented?

- Set up a citizens committee to over-see implementation, keep momentum going. Have training for them to keep them interested



5. Next Steps

The economic development planning project is following a well established 4-phase, 10-step process, developed by EcoPlan. This open house represents some of Phase 2 and 3.



© 2015 EcoPlan International Inc.

- **Phase 1: August - September**
- **Phase 2: September - October**
- **Phase 3: October – January 2016**
- **Phase 4: December – February 2016**

Following the event, EcoPlan will be working with the Steering Committee, Staff and Council to evaluate the actions put forward by the community, and coming up with a draft strategy. At that point, the draft strategy will be brought back to the community for review.