

## TOWN OF FARO OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN PROCESS

### What We Heard From Residents In April

The Town of Faro's consultant team is **completing a draft OCP with some key draft policy directions**. In April, we asked residents and staff to help guide us and Council on a few key questions that will shape the direction of the OCP, and therefore the future of Faro and the experiences of residents. We had 16 responses to our online survey and about 20 residents joined us for various in-person discussions in the Sportsman's Lounge. When asked, **residents chose to participate because** there is a passion for Faro, there was a common interest in sharing, listening, and learning, and there is a strong desire to maintain the community feel with an openness to changes intended to improve the quality of life of current and future Faro residents.

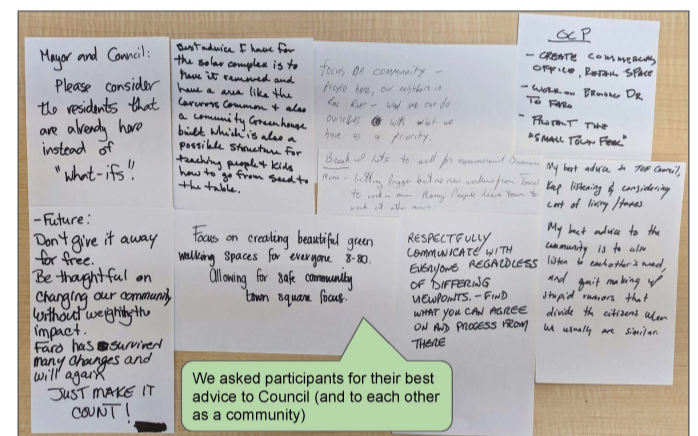
We framed our discussion with the following assumption in mind: all communities change (and some grow, as is the current case of Faro) due to internal and external factors. The **OCP is the Town's best tool to shape HOW (not if) Faro wants to change** (and probably continue to grow) in a way that reflects residents' values and aspirations in a way that builds resilience over the next decade.

**Change and growth** can be a polarizing conversation for any community. They raise questions such as: why is there a push for growth and development? Why can't we better live within our means? For others, change and growth are connected to attracting and retaining talent (like medical professionals) and encouraging families and entrepreneurs to choose Faro. Statistically and anecdotally, we know that the Town has grown significantly over the last several years (the census saw an almost 25% growth between 2016 and 2020, though the Post Master suggested a leveling off in mailboxes which is interesting).

Town CAO Larry Faro shared: "Growth doesn't always happen but change does. Our role is to prepare for that change". The OCP is the best tool the Town has to shape that change in a purposeful way by expressing the values and aspirations of residents while building in strategic and sustainable resilience for the future.

So, we requested citizen input on the following key **draft policy directions**:

- New and extended **land zones**,
- The ideas of a **'Main Street' core**, including the removal of the Solar Complex and re-routing the road to support a small-town and friendly Main Street feel with new commercial opportunities,
- Improving **housing** availability by better bringing the old stock to market for livability, optimizing infill opportunities, developing new lots, and carefully considering the growth in demand for vacation homes,
- Ways to help the Town better support the community in influencing and benefiting from the **remediation project**, and,
- Thinking ahead to 2033, exploring a **recreation facility** master planning process for the replacement of renovation.



On the idea of a **'Main Street' core**, we heard support for being more deliberate about the heart of Faro. To have more flow, less in-and-out, and to create a feeling of gathering and mingling (more than just a place to park). We heard about the importance of maintaining safety, especially for kids, and ensuring that any planning process is transparent and involves citizens.

The **Solar Complex** was of course a focal point of the conversation. One resident wisely pointed out that there were two paradigms: those who knew what it was in its heyday, and those who only know it as it stands abandoned. Some would like to see the facility renovated, some removed completely, while others would like to see some form of replacement to support commercial spaces. There was concern about costs and to what extent residents should/could shoulder the cost, while others were concerned if removed, there would just be a hole. Ultimately, there is recognition that the status quo in 2033 - the next time the OCP will be reviewed - would be a lost opportunity.

When it came to **remediation**, residents shared frustration that the Town did not seem to be part of Canada's consideration. There was a sense that Parsons was using Faro as a resource, and that there needed to be better reciprocity. One resident even suggested, what if Faro could become a center of excellence for remediation projects? There was also discussion on how the Town could better use Zoning as a tool to protect 'essential services' so that, for example, a hotel would not be lost if deemed not in the community interest.

On the topic of **housing**, there was broad interest in supporting aging in place, meaning there was a need for more single-level bungalows, ideally on a flat grade. There was also discussion about new lots, both infill and country residential, and the symbolism of the first 'new' house to be built and its demonstration of confidence in and commitment to Faro's future. Lastly, there was support that the Town be more purposeful on how it navigates the growth in demand for vacation homes. Like many communities, vacation homes can bring benefits to a community but need to be balanced with the needs of more full-time residents.

On the topic of **lot development**, there was interest in commercial in the core (as discussed) as well as industrial lot options, for example behind the mobile homes.



When it came to **recreation**, there was no support to significantly renovate or replace the existing Rec. Center. However, there was agreement to conduct some initial planning work given the age of the facility and the OCP's time horizon. On a cultural note, there is still interest in supporting an Arts Center concept. Looking outside, there was also interest in continuing support for the Dena Cho trail that connects Ross River to Faro, both as a tourism asset but also as a physical connection to our friends and neighbors in Ross River. Lastly, there was interest to better integrate the ball diamond into a 'central core' planning, as well as some light planning and possible infrastructure development to improve enjoyment opportunities at Fisheye Lake.

Several residents saw the OCP as a way to solidify the Town's relationship with the **Ross River Dena Council**. Specifically, to build more dedicated communication channels, and to explore culture exchanges with the Dena Cho trail and sports (like hockey).

A few participants felt that **community safety** could use some attention and responded positively to the idea of approaching the RCMP to explore the development of a Community Safety Plan.

Finally, several residents felt that, in the spirit of improvement with a recognition of capacity constraints, that the Town could improve the transparency of **decision-making processes** to improve community buy-in of public processes, Town decisions, and general trust-building. This is always a challenge for a small organization given very material capacity constraints; this is an opportunity to strengthen the relationship between the Town and residents.

**Where to from here?** The Consultant team will be developing the Draft OCP which will come back to the Town Council this summer (exact dates TBD), where there will be further opportunities for citizens to share their perspectives.

However, the OCP unfolds, a few things remain clear for the consultant-team (if we may). The **residents of Faro love their town**. Faro has some unique challenges to be sure, but it also has some incredible opportunities. The right OCP that reflects resident values and aspirations coupled with strategic priority directions can help maintain the 'Faro feel' while planning for a sustainable, vibrant and prosperous future.

~Respectfully

Jordan Stackhouse, John Glynn-Morris, and Dennis Shewfelt

If you hadn't heard of the "Main Street" core redevelopment idea, it might be because it was edited out of the version in Focused on Faro back in May. All discussion of development ideas for the Solar Complex were removed, along with mention of trust issues between residents and the town. The change and growth paragraph was also edited and the meaning changed.

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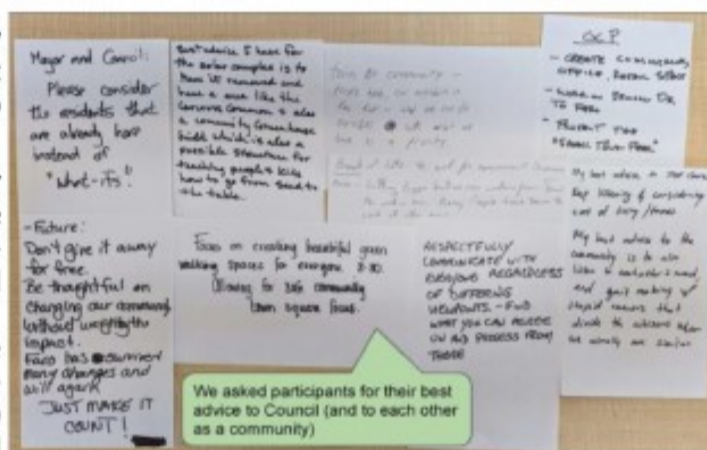


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Details of what we heard is available on the Town of Faro Website at [faro.ca/p/ocp](http://faro.ca/p/ocp)



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Respectfully,

Jordan Stackhouse, John Glynn-Morris, and Dennis Shewfelt

Our Official Community Plan (OCP) is getting closer to being a completed project. As intimidating as this year-long project can be, we appreciate how our contractor is assisting us and leading us through the process. **It was important to Mayor & Council that the finished product NOT be a foregone conclusion set by Council, but something that was the result of community consultation from the beginning. For an OCP to be truly useful, it needs to be community-based and Mayor & Council appreciates everyone's involvement on how you would like to see the community move forward over the next 7 to 10 years.**

← Message from the CAO, Larry Baran, Focused on Faro May 2023.

Mayor's Report, Focused on Faro July 2023, removing consideration of the Solar Complex or "Downtown Faro" or "Main Street" core from consideration in the OCP.

Finally, but equally important, we will be discussing our Official Community Plan (OCP) with our consultants. **It's important to understand that our OCP will reflect the consensus of our Council, not that of our consultants.** It's currently in a draft stage with the final report expected this fall. **While the consultants sought input from the public, for such important issues like the future of the Solar Complex, Council believes the far larger numbers who took part in the plebiscite reflect the wishes of the community as a whole.**

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