

## 2021 Mayor's Year in Review

Happy New Year!

2021 brought about another difficult year, as the COVID-19 pandemic continued to challenge our way of life in the Comox Valley and around the world. Despite these challenges, the Town of Comox has made significant strides in a number of programs, projects, and community initiatives. I'm incredibly proud of the work our staff and Council continue to do, and I'm happy to highlight those accomplishments.

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### Council Updates

The Town of Comox and Council would like to congratulate Councillor Dr. Jonathan Kerr on being elected in November's by-election. We look forward to working with you and continuing a path towards sustainability and community growth.

### Council Funding Announcements

2021 budget approval enabled the Town to provide over [\\$530,000 in funding support](#) to 41 arts, culture and heritage, and public safety and well-being organizations. These organizations are important to the growth and sustainability within the Town to further enhance the quality of life of its residents and businesses.

### Town Grant Funding

Over the last few years, Council has been working to build a new [Marine Services Building](#). Currently, secondary grant funding is under review and will determine the next steps Council can take on this project. Pending the approval of these additional funding supports, the Town will look forward to welcoming a new building in the marina, which will enable further economic development to the harbour and marine industry.

To support active and sustainable transportation in Comox, the Town secured [\\$919,000 in grant funding](#) under the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program: COVID-19 Resilience Infrastructure Stream. This funding will provide a new sidewalk and bike lanes on the south side of Comox Avenue between Rodello Street to Ellis Street.

Through the Ministry of Children and Family Development, the Town received much-needed [provincial funding](#) from Childcare BC's New Spaces Fund to create 16 new daycare spaces. These new spaces will accommodate children aged 30 months to kindergarten at the Aspen Grove Children's Centre.

### Economic Development

Economic recovery continued to be a top priority for Council in 2021, with the approval and extension of the [Patio and Parklet Program](#). This program (set to continue until June 1, 2022) will further support the food and beverage sector and ensure more safe seating space for residents and visitors.

## **Community Development**

In August, the Town opened an [off-leash dog park](#) on the old Comox Elementary School site (located on Rodello Street and Fairbairn Avenue). This project is part of a 5-year pilot agreement between the Town and School District 71.

Over the fall, Council reviewed an [Urban Agriculture and Hen Keeping Feasibility](#) staff report to allow hen keeping on certain lot sizes and increase the sales of on-site agricultural products on single-family properties in Comox. Findings from the public survey held in early 2021 were beneficial in understanding the resident needs and direction Council is looking to take.

Council recognizes the importance of engaging with local youth on future recreation options in Comox. In October the Town launched a [Comox Recreation and Parks Youth Assessment Plan](#) and engagement survey to determine the priorities of youth aged 12-18 years old (grades 7-12) in the area. The survey received beneficial community feedback and provided Council with options to be discussed in February 2022 to move forward in bringing further recreational activities to the younger population.

## **Housing**

The Town recognizes and understands the various housing challenges continuing to face residents in Comox. Unfortunately, most of the challenges occur at a level beyond our municipal abilities. Council and Town staff are doing their best to provide a positive living experience for all residents by working with provincial and federal partners to create larger change within the community.

To support an aging population in the Comox Valley, Island Health signed a development agreement with Providence Living to build and operate a [156-bed dementia village](#) in Comox. The proposed building site will be the former St. Joseph's General Hospital location and will provide long-term care support and accommodations for those suffering from dementia.

In partnership with BC Housing, the Town and M'akola Housing Society announced six (6) new housing units to provide affordable living for those most vulnerable. In addition to using a BC Housing grant, the Town utilized affordable housing funds to provide support in purchasing the properties, enabling M'akola Housing Society with much-needed local support services.

Development plans in the [Northeast Comox](#) area continue to move along, as Council approved implementation bylaws to enable development and community growth. These new bylaws will help drive new tax revenue and assist in affordability by increasing the number of residential units in the area.

## **General Town Updates**

Speeding on roadways within the Town continues to be a challenge. This past year Council took action to reduce speeding in areas of concern, specifically in the Point Holmes area. Council also reviewed a staff report on the holistic changes that can be made to the community to help make our roads safer, which will continue to be reviewed and implemented where necessary. In the meantime, please exercise caution when driving in the Comox area and obey the posted speed limits.

The Town continues to improve street lighting throughout the community, as a number of streetlights have been upgraded to LED lights. This not only helps to improve visibility, but it also provides a more environmentally friendly alternative as we look to improve our carbon footprint.

Safety continues to be a top priority for the Town and Council. We continue to identify areas of concern on roadways and sidewalks and will make adjustments where necessary to ensure community care.

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2022 may continue to bring challenges with the COVID-19 pandemic, but I commend our staff and Council for remaining resilient and doing their best to make Comox an incredible place to work, live, and play.

For more information on these initiatives and other projects being done through the Town, please visit [www.comox.ca](http://www.comox.ca).

Here's to a strong 2022!

**Mayor Russ Arnott**