



Short Term Rental Survey
Conducted By
Sandy Hook Community Association
February/March 2003

This copy prepared for:
District of Sechelt

The Web Page
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Sandy Hook Community Association

Per:

President
Robert D'Arcy

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www.sechelt.net/Sandy/Sandyarchives.html

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Executive Summary

Dr. Kevin Hamilton, Dept. of Psychology, Kwantlen University College said: "The results of both the Tuwanek and Sandy Hook surveys are so robust that one can't help but pay note to the intensity of the neighbourhood distaste towards the commercial activities described."

The Sandy Hook Community Association conducted a comprehensive survey. It expresses the unequivocal wishes of the community of Sandy Hook. There can be no doubt whatsoever now as to what those wishes are:

- 1) **Sandy Hook wants to retain its current residential zoning.** Sandy Hook is not against legal commercial activities and allows for Bread & Breakfasts in support of the tourist trade. Sandy Hook does not want any business activities where the OWNER is not in residence – not available to address problems and concerns and not always part of the community. There is an ambience that a community like Sandy Hook develops where residents walk the streets waving a hello to the neighbours they regularly see even if they do not know them or consider them friends. This comfort and relaxed atmosphere is worth protecting and fostering.
- 2) **Sandy Hook expects the District of Sechelt to enforce Bylaw 25 restricting commercial short-term rentals.** As home owners and taxpayers and/or residents the citizens of Sandy Hook are not just asking for enforcement, **they expect it.** The Council and Administration of the District of Sechelt are obligated to meet this expectation both morally and legally. Failure to respond to this call by their constituents can only be interpreted as evidence, rightly or wrongly, that the District is under some control or undue influence from the tiny group who advocate no enforcement of the law.
It is not valid to argue, as some have done, that the cost of enforcement must be met by the entire District and therefore whether such enforcement goes ahead requires a District mandate. That mandate has been in place since the zoning bylaws were originally constructed. No Council or Administration made laws knowingly planning to ignore them! No Sandy Hook residents anticipated the laws would be ignored when they moved into Sandy Hook.
- 3) On the basis of anecdotal information we can advise that most Sandyhookers accept and/or prefer that enforcement be in accordance with the "complaint process" so that a few non-intrusive violations that do not cause any concern or problems may be ignored. The "complaint process" is also the most economical for the District. Some of the written comments to the survey do send the following warning in this regard, however. The "complaint process" had best work with effective action by the Bylaw Officer and the District or Sandyhookers will move to demanding, as is their right, active enforcement of all infractions.

THE CONCLUSION: Sandy Hook Community Association is transmitting the indisputable desires of the residents and property owners of the community with this report. Clearly if the need arises to escalate the Association activities on this matter to a law suit then Sandy Hook will not have a problem identifying plaintiffs to band together. Suitable action by the District is now anticipated without further delays, surveys, workshops or other activities catering to the short-term rental commercial interests. We look forward to that action immediately.

Purpose and Reason for the Survey

In the summer of 2002 the Association received several complaints from residents within Sandy Hook. The residents claimed to have been disturbed in one way or another by events at properties being rented out on a short-term basis. Complaints to the District did not seem to be resulting in any remedy although the short-term rentals were clearly against Bylaw 25 of the District.

Coincidentally, within a few days of the first complaint, a staff paper was released to the District Council which, in part, proposed legalizing short-term rentals. A quick review with Association board members revealed a convincing objection to any short-term rental activity. The Association decided to attempt to: a) resolve the problems of the affected residents through advocacy, b) relieve the concerns of all residents regarding future intrusions of short-term rental activity into the community and, c) seek a long term solution protecting the residential nature of Sandy Hook. It was the Board's understanding that the vast majority of the residents supported maintaining the residential nature of Sandy Hook.

Throughout the remainder of 2002 and the spring of 2003 the efforts of the Association met with little success. Our neighbour community, Tuwanek, was engaged in the similar attempts at a resolution and was similarly frustrated. Council appeared not to have the will to solve the problem and, of more concern, appeared to be moving towards allowing short-term rentals for the benefit of a very few commercial operators.

In the past, the District Council has conducted four sessions for the public to determine the community's' wishes on this issue and in all cases there was no doubt that short-term rentals were considered undesirable. (See 1999 Short-term rental report to Council)

In 2000 Council paid for the "Vaugh Report" which was seriously discredited by experts in survey procedure. The only direct question in that survey relating to short-term rentals asked: "Would you approve of an owner occupied short-term rental property being developed by...?" An "owner occupied short-term rental property" is not described but the nearest operation to that definition would be a Bed & Breakfast which was not at issue. Short-term rentals that are NOT owner occupied were the problem raised by residents. Oddly, proponents of short-term rentals claimed the survey supported their cause.

In 2003 Council did move to hold a telephone survey of the entire District but prior to doing so did nothing to provide the District residents with background. Only Sandy Hook and Tuwanek had current information or even interest as they had been affected by the problem already thereby generating first hand knowledge. The questions used by the District were open to problems and, in a world of heavy telephone soliciting; hang-ups could seriously affect any results. A subsequent mail out survey was even more seriously flawed: same failure to expand on information; exactly the same poorly constructed questions (some impossible to answer as directed); very short response time allowed (four or five days at most!); no return envelope, stamped or otherwise; yellow paper inhibited faxing; no public announcement but for an erroneous declaration in a newspaper article some weeks prior attributed to the District Administrator and not corrected.

During this time, the parties interested in the expansion of short-term rental activity in the community were anecdotally suggesting that the Association was not acting in the accordance with the wishes of the majority of Sandy Hook. These parties were also doing their own political lobbying. One member of Council suggested the Association was not representative. The board of the Association decided that the community had to be polled to clearly determine its wishes. There was no confidence in any poll conducted by the District.

It was decided that a survey should be held as soon as possible in the spring of 2003 in order to have results prepared for any meetings or workshops the District might hold.

Methodology of the Survey

Several web sites with advice on conducting a community survey were consulted but in the end the members of the Association board and some interested citizens collaborated to set up the procedure which would be followed and the survey questions.

Advising the Residents in Advance:

It was considered critical to inform the residents again of the issues prior to any survey.

- a. Ten days to one week prior to the actual survey a newsletter (See Appendix 1) was distributed to the all residents. (Note: members and non-members of the Association) Distribution was made in exactly the same way that all residents are reached by the Association with every newsletter. Eight newsletters are mailed to off coast residents who are registered with the Association and, in accordance with a recipient approved procedure, another eight are advised that the newsletter may be viewed on the Sandy Hook web site.
- b. The newsletter was posted on the Sandy Hook web site 10 days prior to the survey.
- c. The newsletter was called a "SPECIAL EDITION" to highlight its importance and contained a full face page devoted to a description of the issue.
- d. Reference was made to a private web site (*sechelt.biz*) which contained even more information on the issue for residents to review.
- e. A specially boxed section warned that a survey was coming and invoked: "Your participation on either side of the issue is critical."

The Survey Form

(See specimen form as Appendix 2)

Introduction

- a. The first section introduced the survey as on behalf of the Association and provided instructions to anyone missed in deliveries to get a survey form (presuming they would hear from neighbours or knew from the prior newsletter to expect a form but it had not arrived).
- b. Background was given next. First, it pointed out that the recent newsletter had some in-depth information as did one in September. Further, telephone numbers were offered along with the web site for more information. It was clearly stated that the web site – *sechelt.biz* – argues against short-term rentals.
- c. A clear statement was made excluding certain types of operations from concern e.g. B&Bs and that there was no desire to change the current laws.
- d. Residents were advised that the District was considering changing the zoning in residential communities.

Lead in Questions

These were asked to focus the respondent on the issues relayed to the Board over the preceding months. It was made clear that the survey was for all (including non-members) and that answers were not required to every question but just for the main question later.

Question 1 – designed to determine if the issue of short-term rentals was so important that it might have precluded a respondent buying or moving to Sandy Hook. The responses to this could indicate the overall desirability of a community with or without short-term rentals.

Question 2 – designed to be sure the respondent is aware of the current bylaw restriction.

Question 3 – designed to be sure the respondent is aware housing values might be affected by short-term rentals.

Question 4 – designed to see if the respondent thinks the current bylaw officer, with his working hours, could control a community which has short-term rentals?

The Main Question

It called for agreement or not to a clear two part statement by a large "Yes or No". Should Sandy Hook stay residential and should the District enforce the bylaws to that end. If anyone felt that the entire statement did not fit their philosophy then a No answer would be warranted.

Supplemental Questions

These were asked to assist any future demographic study of the survey results. It was felt that a trend might develop with differing answers between full time or part time residents and between owners or renters. That might be important.

Signature

It was clearly stated as optional whether the respondent signed the form or not and in so doing identified themselves. This was a survey and not a petition so signatures were not required.

Other

Three lines were left for the respondent to make comments or express his/her own wishes. A line imploring that the recipient respond ended the form.

Distribution and Control

Distribution

The Sandy Hook Community Association has a regular team of door to door delivery persons to get its regular newsletters out to the community. The Association elected to strike a new team just for the delivery of the survey. It was not known how the survey might be received and the Association did not want the regulars exposed to any adverse reactions.

Delivery was made to exactly the same homes as the newsletters of the Association. These are homes accessible from or on Sandy Hook Road. Not included are homes on the Sandy Hook Trail (a basically water only access area) or on Tillicum Road. Neither of these areas is traditionally part of the Association's mandate nor do most zoning issues there seriously impact the main Sandy Hook area.

Delivery was made to all homes February 26, 27 and 28, 2003. For those newsletter recipients on the mail out or email list, forms were put in the mail for all on February 26th. In total, 201 forms were delivered.

A "Form package" consisted of:

- One survey form – numbered.
 - One return envelope addressed to the Association with a 48 cent stamp affixed.
 - A small separate form for new or renewal membership in the Association.
- all in a sealed large numbered envelope.

Control

The number on the outside of the sealed envelope matched the one on the form inside. During delivery, the delivery person would note the number on the outside and the house number delivered to on a record sheet. Each delivery person had their own exclusive survey record sheet.

The numbering was designed to serve two purposes:

1. Since certain numbers designated certain streets it would be possible to see if specific areas had particular concerns or responses. In the future this might be important if it was claimed that, say, the lower area of Sandy Hook thought differently from the rest. Maybe one street would show a result inconsistent with the rest. Resolution of the problem might have to take such 'balkanization' of the community into account.
2. If it was ever claimed that the Association had made up forms or results then a neutral third party could run a simple test by calling on some of the respondents and checking that their responses tallied with the form recorded for their address.

At no time was it ever intended that any cross referencing of residents to respondent forms would be done. The delivery survey sheets are held separate from the actual survey responses and will not be called upon except for purpose 1, above and only if required, for purpose 2,

As a side note, the Association regrets not emphasizing on the form that it was confidential unless, of course, the respondent elected to sign it. Even in that event there is no intention of revealing who responded in what way.

Collection and Tabulation

All forms that were returned, but for six, were returned through the mail using the self addressed and stamped envelopes. One form was placed in a fresh envelope and re-stamped as it came from the United States. The other exceptional five forms were placed in the Sandy Hook Tot Park mail box or dropped off at the president's home.

It was arbitrarily decided to cut off the tabulation of results with forms post marked up to and including March 12th. This allowed for over two weeks for responses including two weekends for weekend type owner/residents. (See Appendix for Late Responses)

All returned forms were tabulated daily into an Excel spreadsheet to produce the results that follow in this report. All forms are still available for review along with the return envelopes.

RESULTS

Participation

As stated earlier **201** forms were delivered.

1 forms were returned

2 forms were spoiled – one omitted any answer to the main question and the other had both yes and no circled. While the other answers on each form made it clear that these would be forms in favour of enforcement or a 'yes', it was decided that strict adherence to proper procedures dictated dropping these forms from the tabulations.

This is 45.2 Response

It is considered a very high and valid response from all the research we have been able to review. As you will see next the preponderance of answers to the main question was such that this response can be considered as reflecting the thoughts of a very large majority of the community.

The Association asked an expert in survey procedure to advise informally by email on the validity of the response. Dr. Kevin Hamilton, Dept. of Psychology, Kwantlen University College said, in part, "I'm sure that both the Tuwanek and Sandy Hook surveys are reliable - that is if the same instruments were administered again in a similar way to a similar group of people, the results would be about the same."

Distribution of Responses

As noted earlier, through the numbering of the forms it is possible to ascertain the participation by delivery area. Those results are:

Route	Total Forms Delivered	Total Forms Returned	Returned
Coracle Drive	23	12	52.17%
Coracle Place	21	5	23.81%
Deerhorn	21	11	52.38%
Mail outs	16	9	56.25%
Mt. Richardson/Forest	15	8	53.33%
Porpoise Right	15	5	33.33%
Sandy Hook/Porpoise - Left	30	12	40.00%
Seaview	6	4	66.67%
Skana/Klahanie	14	6	42.86%
Skookumchuk/Bob	31	17	54.84%
Upper Sandy Hook	9	2	22.22%
TOTAL	201	91	45.27%

For all calculations a return of 89 forms is used having deducted the two spoiled forms.

The Main Question

Should the District Council restrict the residential zoning in Sandy Hook?

**4 out of 5 or 4.3 said Yes.
5 said No.**

The overwhelming conclusion is that residents and owners in Sandy Hook are positive about what they want. No number of legitimate further returns could swing the conclusion any other way as the results run 15 to 1 in favour of enforcement of the bylaws and maintaining the residential zoning of the community.

With this mandate there is no longer ANY call upon the Association to be neutral or unbiased. The Association has been told the position to adopt by Sandy Hook. The District is being told by this report and these results.

Carrying on with the other results gleaned from the survey and it can be seen that with every action and response Sandy

Hook underlined its wishes.

Note: Responses below do not necessarily total 89 as all respondents did not answer all questions. This was an option advised to those surveyed on the form. For ease of understanding, percentages are calculated from the total responses received to each question.

Question 1 - *Would you still have purchased here if you had been entitled to purchase the street*

6 out of 11 or 6.0 said No

This response clearly indicates that current Sandyhookers would have looked elsewhere if Sandy Hook had different zoning bylaws. Many commented that they had done their "due diligence" prior to buying and would only consider a residential area clear of commercial and short-term rental issues.

One can only conclude that this reduces the desirability of Sandy Hook properties and, in turn, the marketability of them whether for resale or for new construction.

Question 2 - *Were you considered to be a business activity in a residential area restricted to residential use?*

6 out of 10 or .6 said No

This question was designed so that respondents would consider the issue and if in doubt do some research. Nevertheless it is clear by the number of responses that Sandyhookers gave this issue some thought before answering the main question. Clearly, only owner-occupied business activities are acceptable at all.

Question 3 - *Were you considered to be a business activity in a residential area restricted to residential use?*

3 out of 5 or 3.5 said No

As with Question 2, this question was designed to ensure that thought on an issue went into the answer to the main question. Coupled with the definite answer to Question 1 regarding moving here or not, it is absolutely indisputable that Sandyhookers see their home values, their retirement nest eggs, in jeopardy. Some commented on how frightening this was as inflation or reduced independence might force them to give up their homes to live in alternate housing. They were counting upon a good return from the sale of their homes.

Question 4 - *Do you believe that the current enforcement system could cope with short-term rentals and the extra challenges that come with them?*

0 out of 12 or 0 said No

This revealed that Sandyhookers do not feel that the current enforcement system could cope with short-term rentals and the extra challenges that come with them. Clearly a whole new and expanded enforcement facility would be required, obviously at substantial cost to the District. Several comments told of concerns and gave negative anecdotes about the present control levels with a "5 day week, regular hours" officer.

Full time or Part Time Resident

There was no discernable difference between responses based on whether they lived in Sandy Hook full time or not.

6 out of 10 or .6 declared as full time residents.
10 or 11.63 declared as part time.

Not one of the part time residents voted No to the Main Question which indicates part time residents have the same concerns as the large majority of full time ones.

Owner or Renter

0 out of 6.25 declared as owners
Only 3 declared as renters

- one of these answered No to the Main Question. It is worth commenting that on many issues owner/ratepayers are entitled to more say than others both by law and in principle. It is their home values at stake, for example, and it is ratepayers who fund the District and its enforcement of the laws or lack thereof.

Note on Street Results

As set out earlier, the source of responses by street was monitored to ascertain if there were pockets following some adverse trend. The five No responses all came from different delivery areas - one each from: Coracle Drive, Mail outs, Porpoise Right, Sandy Hook, and Seaview.

ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE OF COMMITMENT

Signatures on Survey Form

It seems the earlier concerns expressed regarding the failure to clarify that the results would be confidential were unfounded since Sandyhookers do not mind declaring where they stand on this issue.

out of or .64 signed the form - many as a couple.

Voluntary Comments from Respondents

Thirty of the 89 forms contained some hand written comment at the bottom.

Of the respondents who answered Yes to the Main Question; the comments ranged from stories about problems with short-term rentals in other places they had lived, to compliments for the Association board.

Of the five respondents who answered No to the Main Question, three made comments but only one was critical of the Association or the survey process. Of the other two, one said they preferred not to sign the form and the other said they thought short-term rentals might be "preferable to 'grow ops'".

There were very few facetious remarks or vicious rants in all of the forms. Clearly Sandyhookers took this survey seriously and responded that way.

Memberships Included with Responses

Sandyhookers enclosed with their completed surveys over 60 of the membership slips with cheques - (or cash in one case) attached. In addition, three respondents enclosed membership slips but no payments so these will be followed up. A new membership came from one of those who answered No to the Main Question. All of these memberships add to the already very representative membership roll and strengthen the Association efforts with the District.

CLOSING REMARKS

By conducting this survey and writing this report the Sandy Hook Community Association has collected and expressed the unequivocal wishes of the community of Sandy Hook. There can be no doubt whatsoever now as to what those wishes are:

- 1) **Sandy Hook wants to retain its current residential zoning.** Sandy Hook is not against some home-based commercial activities and allows for Bread & Breakfasts in support of the tourist trade. Sandy Hook does not want activities where the OWNER (or long term renter) is not the person in the house (or the one coming to it in the case of part-time residents) – available to address problems and concerns and always part of the community. There is an ambiance that a community like Sandy Hook develops where residents walk the streets waving a hello to the neighbours they regularly see even if they do not know them or consider them friends. This comfort and relaxed atmosphere is worth protecting and fostering.
- 2) **Sandy Hook expects the District of Sechelt to enforce Bylaw 25 restricting commercial short-term rentals.** As home owners and taxpayers and/or residents the citizens of Sandy Hook are not just asking for enforcement, **they expect it.** The Council and Administration of the District of Sechelt are obligated to meet this expectation both morally and legally. Failure to respond to this call by their constituents can only be interpreted as evidence, rightly or wrongly, that the District is under some control or undue influence from the very tiny group who advocate no enforcement of the law. It is not valid to argue, as some have done, that the cost of enforcement must be met by the entire District and therefore whether such enforcement goes ahead requires a District mandate. That mandate has been in place since the zoning bylaws were originally constructed. No Council or Administration made laws knowingly planning to ignore them! No Sandy Hook residents anticipated the laws would be ignored when they moved into Sandy Hook.
- 3) On the basis of anecdotal information we can advise that most Sandyhookers accept and/or prefer that enforcement be in accordance with the “complaint process” so that a few non-intrusive violations that do not cause any concern or problems may be ignored. The “complaint process” is also the most economical for the District. Some of the written comments to the survey do send the following warning in this regard, however. The “complaint process” had best work with effective action by the Bylaw Officer and the District or Sandyhookers will move to demanding, as is their right, active enforcement of all infractions.

In conclusion, the Sandy Hook Community Association has now transmitted the indisputable desires of the residents and property owners of the community with this report. Clearly if the need arises to escalate the Association activities on this matter to a law suit then Sandy Hook will not have a problem identifying plaintiffs to band together. Suitable action by the District is now anticipated without further delays, surveys, workshops or other activities catering to the short-term rental commercial interests. We look forward to that action immediately.

Departing from the formality of this report the Association wishes to say,

Thank you very much Sandy Hook and everyone who has an interest in it for your responses and for the new memberships.

APPENDIX

Late Submissions

As stated earlier, the receipt of forms in response to the survey was cut off with those postmarked March 12 or earlier so that proper time could be applied to assessing the results. Nevertheless some additional forms came in and while we have not used them in the actual statistics of this report they were opened in case they included memberships and/or cheques. These forms have been kept separate in their envelopes and all envelopes endorsed with the opening date.

e are pleased to advise that as at March 31st, 2003, 12 additional forms have been received for a total of 103 or a 51.2 response.

Enclosed were 11 additional memberships for a total of 63 accompanying all forms returned.

We do not think it is appropriate to update all the statistics as these late submissions came in since our March newsletter advised of the cut off. On demand we would be very pleased to do so.

Preliminary Newsletter

Newsletter sent out approximately one week prior to sending out of Survey Forms.

Specimen Survey Form



Issue No. 2

Sandy Hook

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