



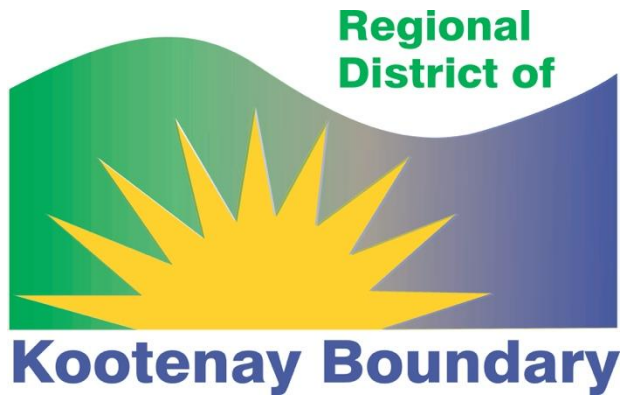
# Age Friendly Christina Lake Action Plan

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For Christina Gateway Community Development Association

December 2015

Thank you to all who contributed to this project!



## Christina Lake Seniors' Housing Society



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## Introduction

The Regional District of Kootenay Boundary (RDKB) received a grant from the Union of BC Municipalities for an Age Friendly Community study for Christina Lake. The RDKB contracted Christina Gateway Community Development Association (Christina Gateway). to do the assessment and action plan. This study looks at the age related barriers and opportunities in the living experience of residents. Input was gathered from numerous sources:

- three public meetings;
- additional meetings with food security and intergenerational themes;
- meetings with five non-profit societies, the local pharmacy and two churches, and a representative from Interior Health Authority; and
- a survey.

Suggestions from the survey and meetings were collected and evaluated according to their feasibility and impact. The top suggestions are the basis for this action plan.

The first sections provide the context for Christina Lake and a review of previous studies in Christina Lake and other BC communities. The report then goes through the top suggestions by seven age friendly community themes: housing; transportation; activities; services; community and social; communication; and outdoor spaces. Two features were added for this report, food security and intergenerational programming.

## Community Demographic and Economic Profile

Christina Lake is an unincorporated area in the Regional District of Kootenay Boundary (RDKB) with a census population of 1,391. Three hundred forty-five of those residents are seniors. The growth rate was -3.1 percent between 2006 and 2011 and there is a projected growth rate of -0.9 percent between 2015 and 2021. The median age is 53.8 and the regional median household income is \$52,690.

Local residents estimate that the seasonal summer population is approximately 7,000, although this is not enumerated by Statistics Canada. The main industry is tourism, although there is enough of a year-round community to support a volunteer fire department and an elementary school. The summer tourism focus causes a boom and bust employment and activity cycle. It is a popular retirement destination because of the mild weather and lower housing prices as compared to other real estate regions in southern BC.

The RDKB has a higher unemployment rate and a lower participation rate (those working or looking for work) than the provincial average, 9.2 percent versus 7.8 percent and 55.6 percent versus 64.6 percent respectively. While seniors are mostly retired, the area has a somewhat depressed labour environment. This affects the quantity and quality of services and stores, cost of living, services provided by local government taxation, and relationships between seniors and non-seniors.



## Previous Studies

### Christina Lake Seniors' Housing Study Final Report

In 2006-2007, the Grand Forks and District Housing Society contracted Margaret Steele to conduct a housing survey and needs assessment. The survey targeted seniors and asked for their housing needs and preferences as they aged. The study noted that affordability was a potential barrier to the feasibility of a seniors' housing development. Supportive housing was the most sought after level of care and over one hundred seniors were prepared to move into seniors housing by 2017. The study conclusion was to pursue development of retirement and supportive housing as a means of keeping seniors in Christina Lake longer, while noting the current barriers to such a development. Further recommendations focus on raising awareness of general support programs for seniors regarding financial incentives to maintain and adapt their houses. Within the context of the current study, the 2006-2007 report identifies the still unmet need to have appropriate housing for seniors to age within the community.



## Other Communities

The age friendly plans for three other rural BC communities were surveyed for their methodology and main results. They had a number of common concerns including maintenance of pathways and building entrances, especially during the winter; access to information about local programs and services; and the availability and accessibility of seniors' housing. Their approaches were generally similar in collecting data to answer questions related to the eight key age friendly features using surveys, reviews of currently available infrastructure and services, and past reports. Two focused only on seniors while Houston's considered the spillover effect of accessibility for all ages in the community.

### Houston

The District of Houston commissioned an Age Friendly Plan in 2014 in order to provide a guide to providing for the increasingly large senior's demographic. A steering committee guided the process with membership from the local government, the community college, and some non-profit societies. The report included an accessibility audit of the core urban area, an environmental scan of existing infrastructure and services, a survey, and a detailed list of recommended actions in each of the eight age friendly key features. The main recommended infrastructure project was an accessible pathway connecting the community hubs and providing a venue for all-season exercise. The main age friendly gaps were:

- *Winter maintenance of roadways and sidewalks.*
- *Affordable and accessible transportation for older adults in and around Houston.*
- *Local access to seniors supportive and assisted living facilities.*
- *Access to recreation, sports, arts, and culture activities that meet the needs of a diverse group of ages and abilities.*
- *Educational opportunities for older adults.*
- *Discrimination and racism against certain groups of older adults.*
- *Lack of information on age friendly events, activities, programs and classes.*
- *Lack of 24/hr care.*
- *Lack of services to help older adults stay in their homes as they age.*
- (Western Canada Accessibility and Enablement Consulting, 2014, 26)

### Revelstoke

The City of Revelstoke conducted an Age Friendly Community Assessment and Action Plan in 2009. Input was gathered through surveys, public meetings, a steering committee, and past studies. They focused on the eight key features and provided recommendations for each. A special submission was prepared for the Official Community Plan undergoing revision. The key recommendations were:

- *Promoting 'aging in place' and the adoption of adaptability guidelines for new and re-development.*
- *Accessibility in terms of parking, bus stops, sidewalks and services.*
- *Enhancement of transportation options.*

- *The development and maintenance of 'Seniors' Walking Routes'.*
  - *Being mindful of aging residents during planning processes in general.*
  - *The development and promotion of a local seniors' resource guide.*
  - *An age-friendly brochure for local business owners.*
  - *The creation of a volunteer coordinator position at the Seniors' Centre to coordinate volunteer drivers and other supports.*
  - *Continue to offer outreach services - like the annual flu shot - in an accessible location like the Seniors' Centre, and*
  - *Increase the number of assisted living units and, eventually, residential care beds in the community.*
- (Zacharias, 2009, 25)

## Creston

The Town of Creston engaged Kootenay Employment Services to conduct an age friendly assessment in 2008 in partnership with the Therapeutic Activation Program for Seniors, and Creston's Community Radio. They focused on seniors, in particular their feeling of security, inclusion, and value. Recommendations were developed to generally improve seniors' lives. Data was collected through a survey and the project also developed recordings of seniors' stories. The main gaps were:

- Housing availability including affordability.
  - Housing costs including insurance and maintenance.
  - Public washrooms.
  - Pathways and building accessibility especially during the winter.
  - Information about local programs and services.
  - Homecare and health services.
  - Transportation to out of town medical appointments.
- (Kootenay Employment Services, 2008)

## Themes

This section explores the eight key age friendly community features as they relate to suggestions gathered from the surveys and meetings. Each theme contains a summary of the issue and suggests deliverables, next steps, and resources.

## Housing

### Seniors' housing in Christina Lake

The Christina Lake Seniors' Housing Society has been developing a seniors' housing project for the past eight years. They are at the stage of acquiring funding and property. A parcel has been identified for rezoning and that application was made in October 2015. An application has been made to the Canada Housing and Mortgage Corporation (CMHC) for a development loan repayable only if the project goes ahead. The Regional District of Kootenay Boundary (RDKB) and Christina Gateway have both been assisting the society.

Deliverables: Additional housing in Christina Lake that would enable residents to age in their community.

Next steps: The CL Seniors' Housing Society applied in October 2015 to rezone a crown parcel prior to purchasing it. After the rezoning process (assuming success) they will be finalizing their financing to purchase the land and the building design.

Resources: CL Seniors' Housing Society, RDKB, Christina Gateway, CMHC, BC Non-Profit Housing Association

### Explore the possibility affordable housing

One of the most prevalent housing comments was the affordability of quality housing combined with availability of rental housing in July and August. Both of these concerns would be addressed by an affordable housing development. It could be developed privately, cooperatively, or through the BC Housing Corporation (BCHC). Each has its advantages and the first steps for all are largely the same.

Deliverables: A survey of Christina Lake residents and a need and demand study of affordable housing.

Next steps: Ask Christina Gateway if they would like to take on the initial parts of the project. Form an advisory committee of interested residents. Survey available funding sources. Develop a survey and a need and demand study with the advisory committee.

Resources: BCHC, CMHC, BC Non-Profit Housing Association, Christina Gateway, RDKB

### Year-round rental accommodation

Much of the rental housing is available for 10 months of the year because landlords come back for July and August or make their properties available to friends and family. Landlords are also attracted by the idea of renting their property by the week for a premium rent during the tourist season. As a result, there is a deficit of year-round rental accommodation.



Deliverables: An information hub for rental houses.

Next steps: Develop a listing of rental houses. Advertise that listing first to landlords and subsequently to the community.

Resources: Christina Gateway

### More pet-friendly housing

Deliverables: A section in the rental housing listing that flags pet friendly housing.

Next steps: Ensure that the rental housing listing includes flags for pet friendly housing.

Resources: Christina Gateway

## Transportation

### Safe foot and bike crossing for Highway 3

Christina Lake is bisected by Highway 3 and there are no crosswalks or pedestrian bridges. The RDKB does not control the roads as Christina Lake is unincorporated and the BC Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MoTI) has refused requests to install crosswalks. The two highest priority areas for safe crossing are at the ends of Sandner Frontage Road as it connects the post office, and grocery store to the rest of town.

Deliverables: A safe highway crossing at either end of Sandner Frontage Road.

Next steps: Ask Christina Gateway or the Christina Lake Recreation Commission (Recreation Commission) if they can take on the project. Confirm that MoTI will not install cross walks or other safe crossing infrastructure. Request an RDKB motion supporting safe highway crossings. Follow up with the Insurance Corporation of BC (ICBC) for support of safe crossings. Educate residents of the crossing expectation that MoTI has for crossing rural highways at intersections.

Resources: ICBC, BC MoTI, RDKB

### Identify key intersections that would be made safer with street lights

Christina Lake has very limited street lighting and a general lack of support for establishing a street light service under the RDKB.

Deliverables: A map of intersections of concern.

Next steps: Review outcomes of street lighting changes for pedestrian and traffic safety. Undertake an analysis of intersection safety and map intersections of concern.

Resources: RDKB Planning and Development and Administration Departments, MoTI

### Provide accessibility feedback to the medical clinic and the grocery store

The grocery store parking lot was identified as a barrier during winter months because of accumulated ice and snow. Access to the medical clinic was also identified as a barrier to seniors pushing wheelchairs.

Next steps: Communicate this feedback to the associated businesses.

### Develop an active transportation plan

Christina Lake does not have sidewalks or separated pathways connecting one end of town to the other. The Promenade path parallels Highway 3 from the north end to the bridge across Christina Creek. It is well used but there is no management plan or general non-motorized transportation plan. The majority of residents walk every day to get around. This action item would address two other recommendations: connecting paths between the two ends of town and lowering speed limits on side roads.

Deliverables: An active transportation plan describing non-motorized routes between key community hubs and a management plan for those routes. Reduced speed limits on side roads.

Next steps: Communicate the need for an active transportation plan to the RDKB.

Resources: RDKB, Recreation Commission



## Activities

### Increase access to the lake

Development of Christina Lake did not include many public beaches or parks on the lake shore especially when considering the seasonal increase in population. There were two main concerns at the south end – launching boats into the lake and swimming / beach access. One hub of concern is the Kingsley Road area where there are many accommodators and only two developed road ends providing beach access.

Deliverables: Circulate the results of the 1993 inventory of road ends to the community for information on the suitability of potential road end development.

Next steps: Consult the community to determine if the project is wanted and politically feasible.

Resources: Recreation Commission, MoTI

### Install more benches

There are several trails that are otherwise accessible except for their lack of benches for resting. Installing more benches will increase the use of these trails by seniors.

Deliverables: Benches installed along level grade trails close to vehicle access.

Next Steps: Identify locations for the benches. Estimate cost and find funding.

Resources: Christina Gateway, Recreation Commission, Gas Tax

### Facilitate a community discussion around summer camps and fitness classes

Selkirk College and some private operators have offered more summer camp and fitness camp options for the last several years. They usually struggle to get enough registrants; however, this suggestion keeps coming up in community discussions. There seems to be a disconnect between the needs of the community and what is being offered.

Deliverables: A summary of what the community wants for summer camps and fitness classes including numbers of potential registrants.

Next steps: Organize a community meeting to receive feedback for the 2016 program year. Identify marketing needs of community for increasing registration.

Resources: Christina Gateway, Recreation Commission, Selkirk College, private fitness businesses



## Services

### Organize a community discussion on homecare with the Interior Health Authority

Residents expressed concern over the availability and quantity of homecare and foot care.

Deliverables: A community information and feedback meeting with representatives from the Interior Health Authority (IHA) in attendance.

Next steps: Organize and publicize the meeting.

Resources: Christina Gateway, IHA

### Encourage the continued development of child care in Christina Lake

There is no child care offered at the moment. Christina Gateway and Sunshine Valley Child Care Society (SVCCS) have tried to develop child care and there is a child care professional willing to run the program. The main barrier is a venue that is not cost prohibitive. Recently the CL Community Association (CLCA) has offered space in the community hall and a child care advisory committee has been formed.

Deliverables: A child care program active in Christina Lake

Next steps: Locate seed funding and certification of the venue.

Resources: Christina Gateway, SVCCS, CLCA

### Maintain the doctors and a pharmacy

Christina Lake has a medical clinic and a pharmacy that deliver good care to residents. The medical clinic is at capacity but the pharmacy could use more business.

Deliverables: Continued quality of care and availability of services

### Maintain first responders

The Christina Lake Fire Department is the first responder service, but they have sometimes struggled to maintain their number of paid on-call firefighters. A related observation is that there are fewer young people in the community as the general trend of rural outmigration continues. As there is no local ambulance station this is an especially critical service for seniors.

Deliverables: Enough paid on-call firefighters to run the Fire Department

Next steps: Support the Fire Department's member recruitment. Attract more young families to Christina Lake (see related action item).

Resources: Christina Gateway, Christina Lake Fire Department, Christina Lake Firefighters' Society

## Community and Social

### Increase volunteer opportunities

Some residents expressed a need for more volunteer opportunities and the non-profit societies are usually looking for more volunteers. One barrier to volunteering is matching experience and interests to opportunities. Volunteering creates social opportunities and supports the community.

Deliverables: A centralized list of volunteers and volunteer opportunities.

Next steps: Engage the non-profit societies to create a list of volunteer opportunities. Advertise current opportunities and make a list of volunteers looking for future opportunities.

Resources: Christina Gateway, other non-profit societies

### Create more open social activities

Seniors are commonly isolated as their mobility decreases and as their social network decreases in strength and numbers. Newcomers to the area often don't know many people. Creating more open social activities will increase the appeal of Christina Lake to new residents and decrease social isolation. There are some existing activities like crib or coffee at the community hall.

Deliverables: An increase in the number, use, or frequency of open social activities.

Next steps: Determine if there are any barriers to attendance at existing activities. Support current groups in increasing attendance at their activities through promotion.

Resources: Christina Gateway, United Church, Recreation Commission

### Organize a discussion on community building

Some residents felt that they weren't a part of the community. Strong community bonds enable resiliency, vibrancy and health.

Deliverables: A community meeting to discuss community building

Next steps: Identify a community champion. Organize and promote the meeting.

Resources: Christina Gateway, the non-profit community, the religious community

### Support Christina Gateway in its Community Economic Development program

Christina Lake is facing the same rural outmigration and aging population as much of rural Canada. Christina Gateway was formed to strengthen the economy and the community and receives core funding through the RDKB. Its strategic objectives include business development, business retention and expansion, increasing communications, and supporting non-profit societies. A major end goal is more young families moving to Christina Lake.

Deliverables: An economically, socially and environmentally viable community into the future.

## Communication

### Strengthen communication channels and evaluate their effectiveness

Some residents indicated that they do not receive enough community information. Over the last three years the Tourism Society, the Christina Lake Arts and Artisans Society (CLAAS), and Christina Gateway have increased their staffing and focus on communications. This resulted in more digital and print materials; however there is obviously still a gap.

Deliverables: An evaluation of current communications channels identifying areas for improvement.

Next steps: Organize a meeting with key communications stakeholders and organizations to discuss cooperatively increasing the effectiveness of communications.

Resources: Christina Gateway, CLAAS, CL Tourism Society, the Christina Lake News, the Grand Forks Gazette, the Boundary Sentinel, the RDKB



## Outdoor spaces

### Aesthetic improvements on highway corridor

Participants in community meetings expressed a desire for improvements to the highway corridor to make it more aesthetically pleasing and welcoming for visitors and residents. This concept is potentially 'out of scope' for an age-friendly community plan but is retained for potential positive impacts on the community. The last community design charrette and planning process was rejected by a small but vocal group. Improving the look of the highway corridor will require support from the business community.

Deliverables: Improvements in highway corridor aesthetic quality.

Next steps: Consider highway corridor improvements in Christina Lake Official Community Plan. Evaluate the feasibility of incentivizing business owners to improve their curb appeal.

Resources: Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, Official Community Plan Steering Committee (to be formed when the OCP process begins)

### Increase public art and murals

Public art and murals can contribute greatly to a community's sense of place, attracting visitors and showcasing local artists and artisans. An initial online search of public / outdoor art programs revealed many programs in large urban areas and some small urban areas (i.e. Chemainus), but less programs in rural areas. Given the interest by respondents to the survey and participants in community meetings, it may be suitable to have follow-up meetings to explore the potential feasibility and resources to support a program or plan for public art.

Deliverables: Plan for public art in Christina Lake, considered or incorporated in the Official Community Plan

Next steps: CLAAS and Christina Gateway to plan initial scoping meetings to determine interest and potential partners

Resources: CLAAS, Christina Gateway, Official Community Plan Steering Committee (to be formed when the OCP process begins)

### Dark sky standard in the OCP

Starry nights are an important amenity of rural areas that enable residents and visitors of all ages to connect with the natural world and cultural heritage. However, poor outdoor lighting design in public and private spaces can contribute to light pollution that deprives people of this opportunity. Safe, efficient and cost-effective outdoor lighting can be achieved through local government planning, and 'model ordinances' (standard bylaws) have been developed to support local adoption (International Dark-Sky Association, 2015). The desire for dark sky has to be balanced with safety and use of lights at intersections or other high use areas.



Deliverables: Ensure that yard and street lights installed are compliant with the desire for rural character as expressed in the existing OCP.

Next steps: Christina Gateway or RDKB Planning and Development Department to dialogue with Fortis BC about the lights they install upon request on their power poles.

Resources: RDKB Planning and Development Department, Christina Lake Official Community Plan Steering Committee (to be formed when the OCP process begins), Christina Gateway



## Food Security

Christina Lake appears to have a fairly food secure population. Resources available to residents are located in Grand Forks with the exception of the “Dinners at Home” program that provides frozen meals. In Grand Forks there is the Whispers of Hope community kitchen and the Boundary Community Food Bank. Whispers of Hope notices seniors coming in to socialize – they are not in need of the services offered, but like the social interaction. An estimated 8-9 hampers from the food bank go to Christina Lake residents with an additional estimated 4-5 residents requiring but not accessing currently available services. The main barriers to accessing services are transportation, awareness, and cost in the case of the Dinners at Home program.

**Deliverables:** Increase awareness of food services by increasing their exposure to residents. This will be accomplished through the community e-newsletter and word of mouth. Investigate the feasibility of volunteer drivers both to the grocery store and to Grand Forks. Create additional open spaces for seniors to socialize.

**Next steps:** Christina Gateway to gather food related information and broadcast it through its communications channels. Christina Gateway to look at rideshare models in use in neighbouring communities. Christina Gateway to look at open social space opportunities for seniors.

**Resources:** Christina Gateway; Whispers of Hope; Boundary Community Food Bank



## Intergenerational Opportunities

The following section is an excerpt from the full “Towards an Intergenerational Community at Christina Lake” (Sandy Mark Consulting, 2015) report commissioned for the Age Friendly Christina Lake project.

As defined by the International Consortium for Intergenerational Programs, “Intergenerational programs” are:

*Social vehicles that create purposeful and ongoing exchange of resources and learning among older and younger generations...Intergenerational programs are activities that increase cooperation and exchange between any two generations...there is a sharing of skills, knowledge, and experience. Integral to these programs are experiences that are mutually beneficial, that meet some needs of both populations and that foster growth, understanding and friendship between the generations. (Kramer & Newman, 1986)*

The intergenerational report reviews best practice principles, models and associated research on intergenerational programs. Part of the project included a workshop with Sharon MacKenzie, the Executive Director of the i2i Intergenerational Society whose broad experience across Canada and beyond informed the results and recommendations to the community. The concept of engaging all organizations in the community to encourage them to include intergenerational activities is proposed since the research showed that seniors’ programs, child care, all levels of education, health, tourism, religious communities, and economic development can all benefit from considering an intergenerational planning lens.

Today's children and older people have limited opportunities for meaningful interaction in a country increasingly segregated by age and marked by long distance grandparents and grandchildren. The generations are divided emotionally, physically, and socially while missing exciting opportunities to learn and share. This may result in growing tensions if the young don't understand the old and the old fear the young. (Chen, 1997)

The report generated the following recommendations:

1. That, after full study, the Board of Directors of Christina Gateway should discuss the concept of designing a plan to facilitate an Intergenerational Community as an economic development strategy and should engage all its member organizations in working together to consider this concept.
2. That the Christina Lake Seniors Housing Society in partnership with the newly formed Child Care Advisory Committee should conduct a feasibility study to determine if the vision presented by the CLSHS to include development of a child care centre in their planned housing development can in fact be economically viable.
3. If seen to be feasible to build the child care component of the development, that the Christina Lake Arts and Artisans Society should work with the Child Care Advisory Committee and the CLSHS in the



design of the space in order for the space to be available and accessible for community arts programs without undue interference with daily operation of a child care service.

4. That the Christina Lake Arts and Artisans Society should consider seeking funding to offer an intergenerational arts program.
5. That the Christina Lake Seniors Housing Society should open a conversation with Interior Health to discover if there is interest in developing a seniors day program in Christina Lake within the new planned development and if so, to explore funding mechanisms that would need to be included in the CLSHS business planning process.
6. That the Christina Lake Seniors Housing Society should develop a relationship with the Christina Lake Elementary School to work together to consider the possibility of creating a visit and activity program within the planned housing development. This would include discussing the development and funding of an intergenerational room as part of the business and design planning process for the housing development.
7. That the CLSHS should open a dialogue with the Grand Forks Secondary School to launch a program for teens from the Christina Lake community to become involved with seniors in the community as part of their studies and that Christina Gateway should facilitate this dialogue. This could focus on the idea of creating an intergenerational community garden, an intergenerational technology program or any of the other program ideas reported in this document.
8. That Christina Gateway Community and its member groups should consider this report and integrate intergenerational concepts into future program and infrastructure development plans.
9. That the Christina Lake Tourism Society consider the information about intergenerational tourism and consider developing and marketing intergenerational holiday packages; and THAT they should engage with other community organizations in creating offerings such as working with CLAAS and CLSS to incorporate arts and environmental programs/experiences in intergenerational tourism packages.
10. That the Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy maintain their programs to provide opportunities for youth to mentor seniors in computer literacy at Christina Lake.
11. That CLSS consider further development of their awareness programs to further facilitate intergenerational activities such as are modelled in this report.
12. That Gateway Digital Marketing Services consider providing a service to seniors to introduce them to working on line with grandchildren etc.
13. That the religious communities at Christina Lake be invited to study the reports provided to consider their own participation in this initiative.
14. That the Grand Forks and District Library, which already provides a wide range of programs for all age groups, consider the work of libraries that have taken leadership in inviting all generations to work together.



## Conclusion

The community input contains recommendations for improving the quality of life in Christina Lake in general with specific considerations for children and seniors. Local groups are already carrying out some of the recommendations like seniors' housing and childcare. Others will require a decision by the resource groups identified as to their strategic value. Fortunately, many are easy to implement without much commitment of resources. Even this list of recommendations highlights the existing quality of life like having a doctors' office, pharmacy, first responders, and a mostly food secure population.

In order for this plan to affect change, it needs to be accepted and used by the RDKB, local non-profits, and community partners. Christina Gateway will present the plan and advocate for its reference in strategic or other planning sessions as the community looks to the future. As with all goals, the first compilation of ideas will not hold as conditions change. The RDKB and Christina Gateway should consider holding periodic reviews of the community's priorities for improving quality of life and infrastructure. One of the most important parts of this process was the community engagement because that is the basis for an environment supportive of change. An empowered community is the most powerful resilience to inevitable change.



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