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## **Experts share their opinions on Kelowna's planners past**

By Jennifer Smith - Kelowna Capital News - April 02, 2008

Want “smart growth,” less urban sprawl and a healthier, greener society?

Try limiting the number of times per year the city will hear zoning applications or Official Community Plan amendments from developers looking to build outside the community's guidelines, said Ione Smith of Smart Growth BC. The town of Invermere did.

And then there's Central Saanich where bylaws force those who own agricultural land to keep their lot sizes large, rather than subdivide.

In the Village of Kaslo, the townspeople decided they wanted a Local Food Charter to solidify that homegrown food choices and protecting food sources are important values.

On the riskier side, advertising dollars are flying out the door to promote the Comox-Strathcona region in an international marketing campaign designed to attract farmers facing pricy land costs in places like the European Union.

Their slogan—The New Provence—graces the pages of B.C. magazines like Country Life and Western Investor and made its way into brochures from the Canadian prairies to Chicago and China, according to BC Business magazine.

The quirky campaign earned a 4,000-word feature in the publication with Vancouver Islanders duking it out over whether it's a wise way to promote their 44,000 hectares of farmable land.

And it also earned a mention from Smith, the presenter who stole the show during the UBCO Urban Forum Tuesday.

Speaking on the clash between urban and rural land, Smith said she thought Kelowna was doing decently in managing development pressure, though it has a long way to go to meet the 10 guiding principles.

“There's a problem of past decision making that current planners are going to have to deal with,” she said, pointing to the city's urban sprawl.

Fellow panellist Kevin Hanna, out from Wilfrid Laurier University, was not so kind.

“I can't help but wonder: Where's the planning?” he quipped, as final presenter Ken Beesley gave the city a B to B- on its development, thus far.

But Smith conceded Smart Growth is a fairly new concept and said Kelowna has the potential to move forward with Smart Growth principles in mind, provided the community makes the decisions for developers, not the other way around.

The principles centre around ensuring people can live and work in their communities, and find the food and shelter they need, all without needing to drive long distances.

Coincidentally Smart Growth BC also launched its affordable housing report Tuesday, based on work the organization has done with Whistler city councillor Tim Wake.

In town to give a sneak preview of that report to those attending the Building Sustainable Communities conference in Kelowna three weeks ago, Wake said the key to building affordable housing into a community is to create an organization specifically tasked to do so.

Smart Growth BC has done extensive work on the Agricultural Land Reserve and why preserving agriculture is important, as well.

Only five per cent of B.C. falls under those ALR protections and, though only one per cent contains the optimum soil conditions needed for growth, some of those precious land stocks are still removed from the ALR for development each year, Smith said.

She showed slides of land excluded from the ALR and a newspaper advertisement promoting workshops for realtors on how to get land excluded from its protections—something the organization contends is not necessary.

“Our organization has never been to a community in this province that doesn’t have ample opportunity for infill,” she said.

Richmond, for example, has doubled in population in the three decades since the Agriculture Land Reserve was created, meaning the municipality has found ways to add more density in their housing options rather than strip away farms, she said.

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