

Maple Bay

The Way it is Now

Maple Bay is a small, residential, seaside community within the Municipality of North Cowichan, about a 10 minute drive from Duncan. Two roads enter Maple Bay but there is no through road. It is quiet, with little traffic noise and no industrial activity although, as a scheduled stopping point for two floatplane operators there is the occasional noise of arriving and departing aircraft.

While the area constituting Maple Bay is variably described, for the purpose of the Maple Bay Plan it is the area east of Mackenzie Drive and Osborne Bay Road, encompassing Stoney Hill and Genoa Bay. It also includes the sea area between Arbutus Point and Octopus Point and the waters of Genoa Bay, although municipal jurisdiction extends only to 1,000 feet from the shore.

Maple Bay itself is a deepwater bay protected from the east by Saltspring Island and, together with Genoa Bay, has one of the best sheltered anchorages on Vancouver Island.

The bays are surrounded by hills (uplands), Maple Mountain at the north end (505 metres), Mount Tzouhalem to the west and south (500 metres) and Stoney Hill to the east (200 metres) These are forested in coastal Douglas Fir, a valuable, rare and disappearing ecosystem that exists mostly along a narrow strip of the south east shoreline of Vancouver Island. Much of these uplands are in the Municipal Forest Reserve. There are two areas of Agricultural Land Reserve, one at the south end of Bird's Eye Cove and beyond, the other between Herd Road and Quamichan Lake. An area of land to the North of Genoa Bay is part of a native reserve and outside municipal jurisdiction.

Many residences have been built within a few hundred feet of the shore line to enjoy a view of the sea.

- The lots extending from Arbutus Point to the bottom of Bird's Eye Cove on the west side of Maple Bay are mostly zoned R1 (minimum lot size just under ½ an acre).
- The lots from the bottom of Bird's Eye cove to Paddy Milestone and round to Octopus Point on the east side are mostly zoned A2 (minimum lot size 5 acres).
- In Genoa Bay the residences occupy a small area looking out over Genoa Bay or Cowichan Bay to the South zoned R1 and A3 (minimum lot size 2 acres).

Upland areas looking over Maple Bay that are not in the Municipal Forest Reserve are mostly zoned A2 on Stoney Hill, A3 on the west side of Maple Bay, whilst those generally looking over Quamichan Lake (e.g., The Properties) are mostly zoned R1.

The roads and streets are rural in character without sidewalks, although in some areas and on the roads into Maple Bay a white line creates a narrow shoulder for pedestrians and cyclists. Access by land to properties on the Maple Bay peninsula is restricted to a former logging road that passes over private property and is secured by a locked gate.

The sea is the focus of much recreational activity. There are four marinas (one in Genoa Bay), a yacht club, a rowing club, a commercial kayak venture and launching ramps as well as a municipal dock, pebble beach with a designated swimming area and clear water and marine life that attracts divers. In addition to marine recreation activities Maple Bay has two public tennis courts, a children's play area and mountain hiking trails.

The sea is home to otters, seals, occasional visiting orca whales and sea lions and species of fish, shell fish and other marine life. However, these have depleted over the years and shell fish gathering is not allowed along the western shore line of Maple Bay, Bird's Eye Cove and Genoa Bay because of sanitary contamination. The forest lands are home to native wild life such as deer and the occasional cougar and bear, as well as native shrubs and plants, although invasive plants are a constant threat.

Some of the original summer homes on the west side of Maple Bay have been replaced by larger homes. Virtually all residential buildings are single family dwellings which vary considerably in design, although most are wooden frame structures. There are several float homes at the marina, connected to a sewage disposal system, but a number of live-aboard boats anchored in the cove raise pollution concerns.

Most homes are on a municipal water supply system. Those homes beyond the marinas at Maple Bay and on Stoney Hill are on independent water systems, either wells or licensed springs. In Genoa Bay the water system is privately owned, supplying the Genoa Bay community at a cost to each user.

The municipal sewage system does not extend all the way into Maple Bay and most homes are on independent septic systems, a few being engineered systems which break down solids. A small number of homes above the Maple Bay Marina are tied into the marina's waste water treatment plant, now owned and operated by the municipality, the discharge from which is into the sea at the entrance to Bird's Eye Cove.

Although there is considerable forest land until recently there were no designated parks except for the small municipal parks at the beach and the dog area opposite the old fire hall. Maple Mountain has a preservation zone along Sansum Narrows in which no logging activities can take place, and all three mountain areas have identified hiking trails. Recently the Cowichan Valley Regional District acquired 128 acres of land at Sansum Point which is designated a regional park and has identified adjacent land of 465 acres as targeted acquisition for parkland.

There are no detailed population or demographic statistics for the area. The average age would be older than elsewhere in North Cowichan as many people have moved to Maple Bay on retirement and the lack of rental property and real estate values make it a difficult choice for young working families. (The municipality has ordered demographic statistics from StatsCan and hopes to receive them before the end of the year).

A study in 2008 based on 2006 census data found that the population growth rate for North Cowichan as a whole since 2000 was approximately 1.07%, or about 60% of the

moderate growth rate projection of 1.8%.used in the 2002 OCP. The study also confirmed two trends, a slowing growth and an aging population, but found that population growth is slowing even more than originally projected, and that the North Cowichan population is aging faster than projected. The study predicted that the population of North Cowichan would grow at the rate of approximately 1.09% annually over the next 15 years, revised to 1.34% for the foreseeable future at the time of the 2011 OCP.

There is no grocery store in Maple Bay although there is a small store at the marina that sells some essentials. There has been a store in the past but it appears that it did not have enough business to continue. The marinas in Maple Bay and Genoa Bay have restaurants, and off Maple Bay beach there is restaurant and a local pub.