

CSRD CORPORATE OFFICE SPACE – FAQs

Q. Why does the regional district need a new head office?

A. The building currently housing the CSRD's corporate offices is leased to us. The lease has been extended to 2009.

Q. Can't the regional district just keep leasing and avoid the cost of building a new building?

A. We're currently paying approximately \$250,000 in annual lease costs. If we could pay that money toward a mortgage, it would actually save money over the long term because we would ultimately own the building. As well, this building does not provide the best facilities for our needs – there is a lack of space for staff to deliver CSRD services, a lack of space for private meetings with customers, a need for improved front entrance/counter space for clients, and so on. Making these improvements would require structural change. In a leased facility structural improvements are restricted, so we have no long-term ability in this location to make the kinds of changes we need to make to improve our business process and customer service.

Q. How long has the regional district been in this building? Didn't you know it wasn't going to be good enough when you moved in?

A. We have been in these offices since January 1, 2003. Leased office space of the size and type we need for our business is not easy to find in this market, so we had a limited choice at the time. We had an immediate requirement to move from our temporary quarters because that building had been sold.

Q. Why did you leave the building you were in before this one?

A. In the fall of 2000, a structural and seismic engineering study was done on the CSRD offices, at that time located on Headquarters Road in Courtenay. The results of the studies determined that in the interests of public and staff safety, we had to relocate to temporary quarters (350-17th Street, Courtenay) while deliberations on a longer-term decision were undertaken. After several months at the temporary facility, which was not adequate to handle long-term day-to-day operations of the district, leased space was found at our current location at 600 Comox Road in Courtenay.

Q. Aren't a lot of buildings not built to seismic code, and wasn't that just an excuse to move to get a new building?

A. Regional district offices provide public assembly space – ie. board and other public meetings are held in them – so we were advised that in the interests of public safety and liability we had to find other premises. Once we became aware of the seismic issues, we could not ignore them. Essentially the old building was condemned as a result of the findings of the studies.

Q. Where is the new head office going to be located?

A. We don't know yet. We have contracted a consultant who is currently reviewing and analyzing a number of options for our relocation. He is looking at various sites involving public land, and measuring against criteria including customer base, business needs, wireless communication requirements, transportation and emergency coordination possibilities. The consultant is also looking at the possibility of "co-locating" a regional facility with related agencies for even further improved customer service.

Q. Is the public going to be consulted about a new head office?

A. We did conduct focus groups in early 2006 with a variety of those who do business with us in-person. The regional district does the majority of its in-person business with specific user groups, rather than with the general resident population. The results of those focus groups are taken into account by the consultant.

Q. How much will a new building cost? Will the regional district taxpayers be footing the bill?

A. We don't know the cost of a building at this time. The financial plan will be finalized when we have determined partnerships with co-locators, which will drive the size and cost of the site and building. There is currently \$1.5 million in reserve funds set aside for use towards the corporate building, and the dollars currently spent on leasing a building would be used instead to pay borrowing costs of the building we'd ultimately own. We estimate that either the lease costs or borrowing costs per year would cost regional district property owners between \$0.03 and \$0.05/\$1000 assessed value or between \$3.00 and \$5.00 for every \$100,000 of assessed property value.

Q. How long will it take to get everything done, and will business be affected?

A. Timing will be better determined once we know about a partnership with a co-locator, as that will affect size and location. We don't anticipate significant disruption for our customers.