

From: Craig Terry [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, March 7, 2022 1:54 PM
To: Islands2050
Subject: RE: Islands 2050 Policy
Attachments: ATTN Islands Trust Council 2050 Policy.pdf

RE: Islands 2050 Policy. *Not in support of increasing regulation on the use & development of private property, & reducing economic opportunity.*

ATTN: Islands Trust Council

My family and I moved to Thetis Island almost two years ago, some may consider this a detriment to our ability to provide a useful opinion on the subject at hand, but what I can provide is an outsider's view of what is being discussed at a larger scale. I grew up on an island not terribly far away that went through a series of similar changes to the process of approving development in the '90s and so I can confidently point to where this is all going, and then perhaps it will bring into focus what is actually being discussed.

The people who choose to live on islands are a unique cast of characters, but in broad strokes they have a can-do, independent streak, which is necessary to their success. They have to do for themselves much that is done by others in a city: from ensuring their own water supply to fighting fires and tipping their trash, even providing their own electricity at times. Islands host small communities that need to trust their neighbors to not steal their property, call if they see a stray pet or child, and check in on elderly neighbours after a storm. This community aspect has become incredibly rare in larger cities and so is highly attractive to young and old who grew up in similar communities that have disappeared. This strong community, natural beauty and the availability of space makes it particularly attractive to growing families, like mine, that are increasingly incapable of affording the space they need in more urban and suburban environs.

The influx of new people in a small community is understandably threatening to current members who find change unsettling, but is necessary if the community is not to become stagnant. Newcomers bring ideas and energy to projects that take incredible amounts of time, money and physical effort, which make life better for everyone. We volunteer for the fire department, provide playmates for local children, and start or revitalize farms and small businesses that serve everyone and create jobs.

It is an unfortunately common aspect of small communities to not trust new people. We were pleasantly surprised to find this tendency is largely absent on Thetis Island, as we have found everyone to be so welcoming from the first time we visited almost a decade ago. The unknown new islander, or worse distant landowner is inevitably hard to conceptualize, has unknown motives, and so is easy to pigeonhole. So it is unfortunately common for people who are nervous to turn the unknown new people into crusaders of "Gentrification," or worry about growth making the lovely little island they call home look more like the suburb they just escaped. To fend against this perceived threat they create barriers to entry by discouraging communication and transportation infrastructure improvements, turning large tracts of land into community parks, and restricting the development, maintenance and use of private property.

The island I grew up on was an easy place to build when my father and various other handy hippies moved there in the 70's. When I went to look at buying a house in that same community a few years ago it was daunting because a move-in ready house started at \$1.3 M and a bare "buildable" lot cost \$300k. What had changed? This was answered by our neighbour's son who started trying to build a home next to my parent's place. He had to spend \$500k in permitting and infrastructure "improvements" to satisfy the local authorities that storm-water-runoff would be contained, that the septic system could percolate and had multiple extra locations to do so, that a paved 30' wide road would be provided to a single residence. Of the 5 lots the neighbors own, only 1 was currently permitted to build on as the rest were deemed to not have the proper set-back from a slope. All of these overlapping restrictions unfortunately placed the construction site directly next to my parent's house even though they both live on 5 acres. My parents went from being annoyed at the construction, to feeling genuinely sorry for him and helping out as much as they could once it was clear what a ringer they were going through. It was amazing to watch that it was so hard to do something as pedestrian as build a house on a piece of land that had been prepared for it since the '90s.

I urge you to discuss what your underlying goals are, and if going down this path of increasing restrictions on private property is worth the ultimate costs. When houses are hard to build there are less of them, and they cost more because only professionals can afford to permit and build them. So instead of independent creative young people building homes for their families, larger companies do it and they become more cookie-cutter, appear more "Gentrified", and the people who move into them are less independent. The community becomes more fragmented and less trusting because if I have an ax to grind with you for any reason I can make an anonymous tip-off to an inspector that you may be violating a rule. Even if you had every right to cut down a tree, or mow back some brush on your property you'll hesitate if it could mean having

to explain yourself to someone from officialdom that is motivated to not trust that you are acting in good faith. These restrictions de-motivate people from developing and maintaining their property, which leads to rundown buildings and properties. Loosely defined regulations create uncertainty and put power into the hands of unaccountable enforcement agents instead of independent citizens and elected representatives that understand the whole picture.

So what I am asking the Island Trust to do is to Trust the Islanders: old and new;

- That their interests in living in a beautiful and vibrant community include preserving the natural environment.
- That they will get onboard with your specific goals, if properly communicated and incentivized.
- That the focus should be on education and carrots rather than sticks

Specific items to note from your proposal that are thinly veiled ways of limiting growth:

1) Fresh water falls abundantly from the sky 9 months of the year in this area. People on Thetis respect that, and don't use wells to irrigate in the summer, keeping cisterns or storage ponds. Telling people for whom this is not a good option that they can't use RO systems when they are better than ever and can be powered by solar makes no sense.

2) I grew up in a place that placed eelgrass above people and now there are hardly any docks because the old ones fall into disrepair, so few people use boats to get around, which doesn't make any sense on an island. It is like restricting someone's option to have a driveway. Besides, the small fish that are the reason for protecting these beds like hiding under docks as much as in the grass, so it achieves nothing.

3) Reducing the options for revenue on additional dwelling units by restricting short-term rental is not going to increase the number of people interested in investing in building or maintaining them. In the long-term it will decrease the quantity and quality of rental units available, and so is ultimately counterproductive to your goal of increasing the availability of affordable housing, as rent control always is.

Current restrictions from the Islands Trust and the CVRD are sufficiently onerous to turn people away from engaging with them. You note on page 4 of the draft predictable outcomes of this “...*skyrocketing real estate values, loss of rental stock, prevalence of non-permitted, unsafe, unhealthy housing...*” Doubling down on this by increasing

restrictions is shortsighted; it solves none of the problems you claim to be interested in addressing.

Further restrictions appear particularly out of step with the times, as the provincial government is currently threatening municipalities across the province to remove impediments to housing growth or risk having the power to make local approval decisions revoked. There are not many voters in the area the Islands Trust oversees, and most of the islands are positioned near the largest growth areas in the province. By following an old playbook from the late 20th century we are missing an opportunity to have a voice in how this change happens. If you take up the challenge to be a change leading organization you can mould its course rather than get dragged along by it and lose all influence.

I know communicating and educating is more difficult than threatening and punishment, because I've been trying to educate people in a variety of subjects my whole life. For better or worse is the only sustainable way to proceed in a just society, meeting people where they are and negotiating with them about what is important and how common goals should be accomplished. We have all seen the downsides of top-down approaches to government over the last couple years, most egregiously in places far from the islands we love; but let us not excuse the tiny tyrants within our midst just because they have limited goals, an abundance of free time and good slogans.

It takes a great deal of time and focus to track and respond to what an organization like the Island Trust is doing, particularly when one is working full time and raising a family. Do not interpret silence, or lack of engagement in your process as an acceptance of your proposal by the majority of island residents, many of the most impacted will only find out about what has been decided too late to do anything about it. We have a representative form of government for a reason, so that citizens can spend most of their time minding their own lives while trusting that the people they choose to represent them are doing so honestly, advocating for them even when they are not paying very much attention. I would appreciate it if you would resist the understandable, but highly unjust, tendency of empowering the loudest squeaking wheel to make decisions for the rest of us.

Thank you for hearing me out.

Warm Regards,

Craig Terry

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