

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: Wednesday, July 29, 2026 5:45 PM

To: northinfo <northinfo@islandstrust.bc.ca>

Subject: Draft OCP - Community Feedback

To the Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee,

Please find attached my comments to the Gabriola Official Community Plan. There is a lot to like about the document. My comments pertain to just one area of the Plan.

Kind regards

Margaret

I am responding to the draft Gabriola Official Community Plan. I appreciate the plan's consideration of the environment, cultural heritage and its emphasis on community well-being and sustainability. There are many strong points to this plan.

My concerns relate to two policies under the Rural Residential Designation (Section 2.4.3.6): Policies 2.4.3.6.2 and 2.4.3.6.3.

First, I object to the removal of the small rural and large rural residential designations which appear in the 1997 OCP. The small rural residential and large rural residential designations need to be put back into the draft OCP. The large rural designation provides many protections to the community, protections that are not dependent on bureaucratic provisions or social engineering. The large rural designation preserves open space, the social character of the community and wildlife habitats by providing clear guidelines on the maximum allowable buildings and floor space of a secondary dwelling. Open space needs to be protected in the bylaws. Peacefulness and nature are healing and therapeutic contributing to resilience and wellbeing. These conditions also align strongly with Indigenous ways of living and being.

Second, and relatedly, I strongly object to the addition of flexible housing policy 2.4.3.6.3 to the Rural Residential Designation (Policy 2.4.3.6). It lacks specificity on the allowable maximum combined floor area and as such can override the number of allowable dwellings outlined in Policy 2.4.3.6.2. I fear that either intentionally or not, the placement of the flexible housing policy and its notable lack of specificity is seriously misleading to many Gabriolians. As suggested in the July 22 Sounder, this could potentially lead to the application of the Mayne Island land use bylaws down the track. I can't imagine the impact that 4 dwellings on each of the five properties bordering our 5-acre property would have on the character of our neighbourhood. This policy needs to be removed from the OCP. It is misleading and subject to a spectrum of variable interpretations through its vagueness. This is not a hallmark of policy.

The companion document (page 12) indicates that the LTC has not identified areas on the island where the flexible housing policy can be applied – "that would be a separate project". So, the LTC wants to the community to support a vague policy where neither the maximum floor area of dwellings is specified, nor the specific areas on the island that are under consideration for application of this policy (other than areas with limited impacts on water, environment and cultural heritage). This is unacceptable from any

vantage point. A vaguely crafted policy without specification is not a policy at all and can lead to a host of unintended negative consequences.

The current situation on Gabriola is that many rural properties already violate existing residential zoning bylaws. One 5-acre property on our street has 4 houses/dwelling units, including a “tiny house” with unpermitted septic systems illegally installed. Another property on our street had a person living full-time in an RV with no septic – sewage was dumped onto the property. Leaving the draft OCP with the flexible housing policy in the Rural Residential Designation and removing the large rural residential bylaw will lead to more unpermitted and unregulated housing installations. There is no financial incentive to add dwellings given permit costs and potential increase to property taxes. Dwellings will continue to be added, but under the radar, and potentially in greater violation.

A serious problem here is there is no formal mechanism for bylaw enforcement. The only mechanism for monitoring illegal housing is ‘neighbours complaining about neighbours’, which has already led to major social fracturing on Gabriola. While the Islands Trust is responsible for updating the OCP, it has no role in enforcing the bylaws that it is proposing. This is the role of the RDN and by extension the Health Department. When we politely raised our concern about illegal numbers of dwelling units and the installation of an illegal, unpermitted septic system with a neighbour, they stopped talking to us. All one needs to do is read the weekly Southerner or have a discussion with the bylaw enforcement officer to get a taste of the entrenched disagreements between neighbours and the havoc it can wreak in their lives. I am sure this is not good for the mental health and wellbeing of the community. Relying on complaints from neighbours as the only mechanism for bylaw enforcement is a bureaucratic cop-out. The revisions to the Rural Residential Designation policies in the draft OCP will worsen illegal housing installations by residential property owners.

These two sweeping changes in the draft OCP have the potential to destroy the rural lifestyle and livelihood of Gabriola. The Islands Trust needs to carefully consider the preferences of property owners who moved to Gabriola for its rural lifestyle and who wish to preserve its natural and social habitats. Change is possible, but not by putting forward a vague and misleading flexible housing policy and getting rid of one of the best strategies to preserve open space on the island (i.e., the large rural residential designation). Open space contributes strongly to health and wellbeing of the community. It needs to be protected.