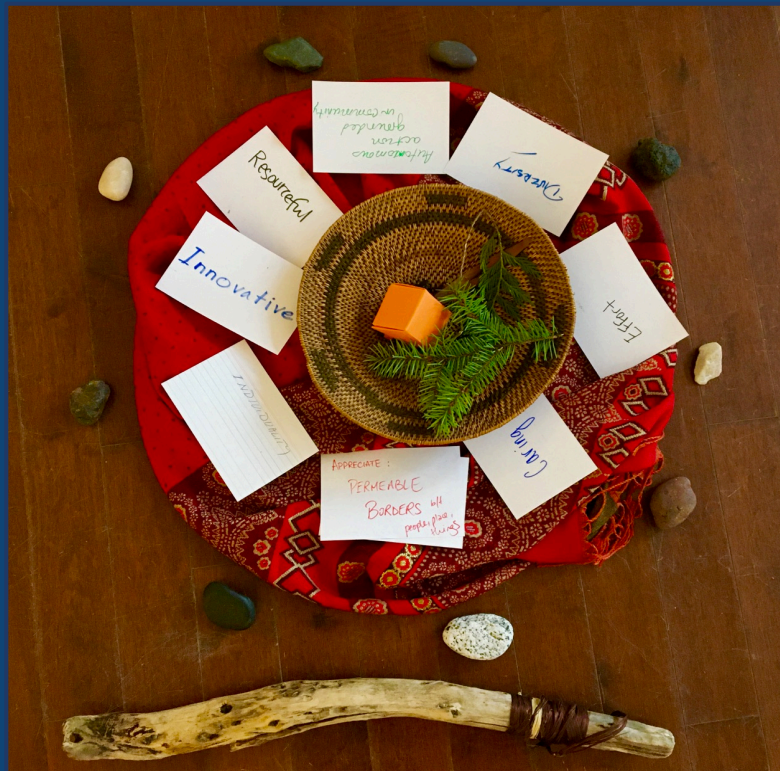




# Gabriola Housing Advisory Planning Commission (HAPC) - Engagement Strategy Planning Session



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Prepared for:  
Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee  
c/o Island Planner

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## Context

On January 11, 2020 Hum Consulting facilitated a one-day planning session with the Housing Advisory Planning Commission (HAPC) in order to advance Gabriola Island's Local Trust Committee's (LTC) top priority project, the 'Housing Options and Impacts Review Project'. The session intended to support the HAPC to make recommendations to the LTC on:

- the methods and paths of engagement based on the defined options of the project, engagement strategy recommendations and available fiscal and staff/HAPC resources;
- defined role(s) of the HAPC within the engagement process.

This report summarizes the results of the planning session and provides recommended next steps.

## Purpose of Engagement

Defining the purpose of engagement is important for selecting the most appropriate methods of engagement. In general, there are three main outcomes which the engagement process aims to achieve:

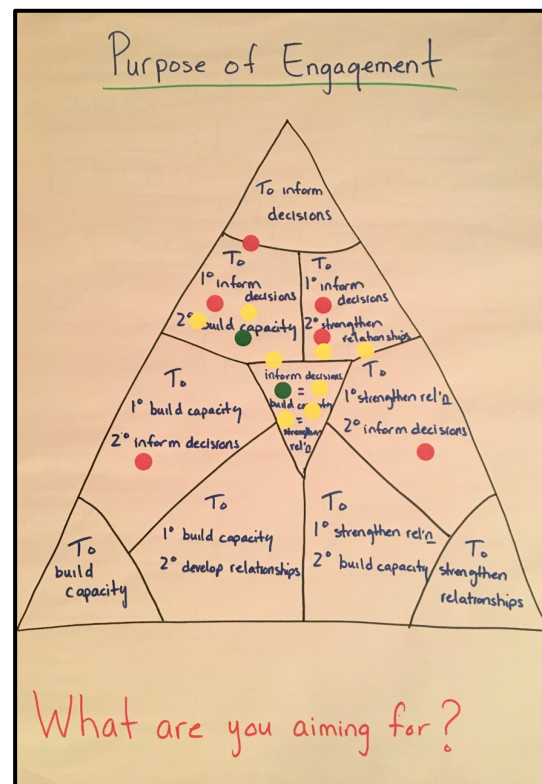
1. Inform decisions
2. Build relationships
3. Build capacity

The HAPC were asked "what is the purpose of engagement?" Each person shared their overall rating on the engagement triangle (red and green dots).

They then shared, one at a time, their perspectives on the following questions:

- What are the beneficial outcomes to community?
- What do we hope to learn?

They were then asked to answer, "what is the purpose of engagement?" again (yellow dots). As the photo shows, the HAPC recognized that the primary reason for engagement was to inform a decision; however, there was a clear understanding that in order to do that well, relationship building in the community and building the capacity of the community to understand the decision were essential. Below is a summary of the HAPC's desired outcomes of engagement and what they hope to learn.



### **What are the beneficial outcomes for the community?**

- Everyone has equal access to clear, accurate, and accessible information
- Everyone understands the issues
- There is agreement on the facts
- The process reduces polarization and people understand each other
- There is common agreement on supporting the community most at risk and to do it in a way that fulfills other needs (e.g. environmental)
- There is hope that the sentiment that pits the “will of newcomers” against “long-term residents” dissipates and that all focus instead on love and care for our most vulnerable populations and a respect for where we live
- That the objectives of the LTC housing project are understood
- That feasible steps to amend or improve the OCP and LUB come forward
- Clarification of the problem, productive dialogue and problem solving
- There is an understanding of the complexity of the problem
- New language is developed to shape this conversation
- There is a clear shared goal focused on what is community (maybe community values?)
- There is a shared sense of ownership and everyone can recognize their voice
- There is a willingness to do things differently

### **What do you hope to learn?**

- What the needs are that underly the concerns – it is a true gift to know what the root of the issues are
- That resistance can be turned around
- Whether or not people are willing to make the changes required. What is the appetite for real change?
- Diversity of opinions, including identification of other issues
- How the politicians will react to the information that is received
- Communicating the political needs
- How innovative the community is – can we leap to a ‘yes/and’ mind set vs. ‘either/or’
- How our community can come together
- How diversity can become a strength and divisiveness is decreased
- A process for how to engage on complex issues going forward
- How to be comfortable in complexity

# The Engagement Question

The engagement question is important for motivating widespread participation in the engagement process and ensuring that the process meets the needs, not only of HAPC, but also the stakeholders. The first step in this task was to identify who the stakeholders are in the Housing Options and Impacts Review Project. The stakeholders that HAPC identified were:

- Homeless and those who are at risk of homelessness
- Social and health-focused community-based organizations
- Renters
- Employers and employees
- Landowners (both resident and non-resident)
- First Nations
- Environmentalists
- Developers
- BC Housing
- Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee and the Islands Trust
- Regional District of Nanaimo

The community stakeholders were broken down into 4 groupings: 1) Homeless and those who are at risk of homelessness + social and health-focused community-based organizations; 2) renters, employers, and employees; 3) landowners, First Nations and environmentalists; and 4) developers and BC Housing. Due to lack of representation, LTC and the Regional District were put to the side. Each group was tasked with answering the questions: What is your position? What is your interest? What question must this project resolve? Based on the responses, the group was then challenged with developing the one question that would take into consideration the interests of all the stakeholder groups and motivate the community to participate. There was much conversation about the wording of the question that would appeal to all stakeholders. In the end, the question created was:

*How might we amend Gabriola's Official Community Plan (OCP) and/or Land Use Bylaw (LUB) regulations in order to fulfill our obligations to our community and the unique natural ecology in which we all live, by allowing for a range of affordable, accessible housing options, while requiring that water and energy conservation standards be met?*

A recommended rewording of this question is below. This framing re-focuses the question on housing by moving it back upfront, includes specific language of at-risk community to align with the priority engagement themes, and includes water, ecology and energy conservation at the end. It may also be beneficial to replace the word standards, with requirements if that is more accurate. The question then becomes:

How might we amend Gabriola’s Official Community Plan (OCP) and/or Land Use Bylaw (LUB) regulations to allow for a range of affordable, accessible housing options to fulfill our obligations to those most at-risk in our community and conserve water, energy and our unique ecology?

## Level of Engagement

Identifying a level of engagement supports the development of a specific public participation goal. HAPC reviewed each of the four stages of the project as outlined in the Housing Options and Impacts Review Project charter and selected the desired level of engagement (inform, consult, involve, collaborate, empower) for each stage. The results are presented in the following table.

<b>Project Stage</b>	<b>Level of Engagement</b>	<b>Promise to the Public</b>
Phase 1: Laying the Groundwork	Inform	Here’s what’s happening
Phase 2: Exploring our Options	Consult/Involve	Here are some options, what do you think? + Here’s a problem, what ideas do you have?
Phase 3: Exploring our Future	Inform	Here’s what’s happening
Phase 4: Walk the Talk	Inform	Here’s what’s happening

The next step will be to develop objectives that align with the level of engagement for each stage.

## The Engagement Process

While considering the purpose of engagement, the engagement question, and other information gathered at the first community engagement session, HAPC were then tasked with visioning the engagement process. It did this by brainstorming responses to: what do we need to know from community? what activities will we use to engage with the community? And, what information is needed to support understanding/participation? Responses are presented below in the order of preference indicated by dots:

### Supporting Questions

- Do we want to make changes to the OCP/LUB?
- Do you understand the alternative policies and regulations and potential impacts?
- How important is each key theme to you?
- How important is it to protect the environment?

- What potential benefits or risks do you see by amending OCP/LUB for housing, environment, etc.?
- How familiar/comfortable is community with key terms and concepts (e.g. OCP, LUB, etc.) and how can we create clarity?
- What do you hope can be achieved?
- What changes to zoning regulations will achieve the desired results?
- What level of impact (low, medium, high) do you want the solutions to have?
- Do we need to provide housing for people at risk?
- What are your thoughts on increasing density?
- If you want changes, how do we consider people, place, environment?
- What information do you need to give feedback or input?
- How do you describe your relationship to this land/island?
- What creative solutions exist that we haven't thought of/presented?
- How do you feel about the language of the OCP (i.e. density?)
- What is the simplest most straight-forward change you think we can make to the bylaws to affect the greatest amount of change?
- What is working regarding housing in our community?

### **Supporting Methods of Engagement**

- Meet people where they are at by using meetings of existing groups and networks in the community
- Plan-in-a-box and dinner group exercise / "Kitchen table" small group meetings of 8-10 informed members to contribute ideas
- Create visuals and have food
- Use social media for progress reports and updates and use website to display graphical illustrations of Official Community Plan problems and (potential) changes
- Survey to capture range of support for different alternatives
- Workshops to explore alternatives / large group process with table discussions to capture general preferences
- World café
- Pop-up voting stations

## Information to Support Engagement Efforts

- Technical/gap analysis of existing OCP & LUB
- Build out map 2020
- Plan language rental tenure zoning options
- Plain language DPA tool descriptor
- Plain language coastal douglas fir protection options

## Role of HAPC

The day ended in circle dialogue with the question: What is the role of HAPC in the engagement process? The responses included:

- To find out what the community thinks about this issue
- To gather thoughts of community in a meaningful way
- To adequately frame the question and pass information on to decision makers
- To extract community knowledge and transmit it to decision makers
- To ensure the community engagement process results in community buy-in and collaboration
- To continue what we've been doing and make the ideas come to life
- To create a learning environment / space to have conversations, to listen, and to contextualize and interpret the information to provide to officials
- To offer an opportunity to make informed decisions

From this information, there may be two potential roles of the HAPC. These roles should be verified with the commission:

1. To have a hands-on role in creating and implementing engagement activities in the community, including facilitating discussions and hosting community events
2. To accurately translate information received in engagement efforts for decision-makers by reviewing summary documents prepared by Islands Trust



## Next Steps

The steps below are recommended for supporting the finalization of an Engagement Strategy for the Housing Options and Impacts Review Project.

- Obtain consensus on the desired role of HAPC and the amount of time they can commit to this process over the next two years
- Get agreement from decision-makers on the proposed level of engagement. It may be beneficial to draft a promise and have them sign off on it.
- Define the objectives for each stage in the engagement process so that evaluation questions can be determined, and engagement methods can support achieving these objectives
- Develop an evaluation framework to support issues identification and course corrections throughout the engagement period; and, to learn from the process in order to support future engagement processes on complex issues
- Review the engagement strategy through the lens of the values as laid out in the Housing Options Impacts Review Project charter, including inclusion, respect, community voice, innovation, wholly and equitably informed and engagement as an ongoing process.
- Identify other resources available to support the engagement strategy (e.g. APC)
- Secure resources that align with the promised level of engagement and develop a detailed Community Engagement Plan including key considerations for communications



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