

From: Laura Patrick <lpatrick@islandstrust.bc.ca>

Sent: Sunday, January 16, 2022 5:50 PM

To: Janice McLean <[REDACTED]>; Peter Luckham <pluckham@islandstrust.bc.ca>; Peter Grove <pgrove@islandstrust.bc.ca>

Cc: SSIInfo <ssiinfo@islandstrust.bc.ca>

Subject: RE: Housing Needs on SSI

Janice,

I am trying to bring people together to work on this important issue. The purpose of the task force is to bring a diverse voice together to work toward solutions. We will be conducting public engagement very soon.

The objectives of the housing action planning initiative are to maximize the benefits and minimize the harms of new housing on Salt Spring, including its ecological, climatic, and socioeconomic dimensions. The Salt Spring community is made up of residents of all abilities, incomes, lifestyles, livelihoods, and household types. We need a spectrum of housing types to ensure a healthy and diverse community.

You bring up an important issue – data. We do need to find ways to better understand what is happening.

Laura

From: Janice McLean [REDACTED]

Sent: Sunday, January 16, 2022 5:02 PM

To: Peter Luckham; Laura Patrick; Peter Grove

Subject: Housing Needs on SSI

Dear Trustees,

I have given this issue of housing needs on Salt Spring Island a lot of thought, and I hope that you each will read this letter with an open mind. I was very disappointed that trustee Laura Patrick described concerns about expanded densities as fear-mongering, jibber jabber and droning on. To me these are unacceptably disrespectful put-downs and do not encourage residents to listen to each others concerns.

I am a [REDACTED] year resident of SSI and was the landlord of a legal, low cost rental for [REDACTED] years. I am very concerned about the shortage of rental housing here – subsidised, workforce and for retired people.

Starting with a quick look at CRD/census population numbers, it seems that SSI's population has been growing by approximately 100 people per year over the past 20 years.

Then I asked what has happened to housing stock. Since the early 90s when we moved here, the additions include a constant increase in new homes, cottages and suites all over the island, plus the Ganges area developments of Kingfisher, Bishop's Green, Bishop's Walk, Roscommon, Cottonwood Close, Summerside, Meadowbrook, Heritage Place, and more are planned such as Meadowlane. In addition, there has been subsidised low rent housing added with Salt Spring Commons, Murakami Gardens, Croftonbrook, Lautman House and others being planned including Drake Road and Dragonfly.

So at first glance the housing stock seems to have more than kept pace with the population increase. This led me to the proliferation of STVRs. How much of the housing rental stock has been diverted to the lucrative tourist accommodation. (Please see the attached article.) I think we need this data. Can it be that difficult to look at advertising platforms such as AirB&B, identify all on Salt Spring, list those which are illegal and act to try to get them returned to rental or owner-occupied housing for locals. Our OCP is clear that STVRs are prohibited.

In 2020 you expanded the suspended enforcement of all illegal dwellings on SSI "until there are safe, secure, appropriate housing options for all demographics and household types in perpetuity". But since there is no rent control, rents can go as high as the market will allow.

It would be very helpful if you would define what you mean by "affordable" housing. How much subsidised housing is needed for a population of our size? Where does rent to income apply? It is important that this housing be for SSI residents and not attract incomers. I have been saddened by the stories of long time residents leaving the island because of housing costs, and of course we personally know people who have been forced away for this reason.

What is considered affordable for working people? I am assuming that there is a range of incomes from a store worker to a newly arrived doctor, and that family size is also a factor in housing needs. What is the data on salaries, and what percentage of income is appropriate for rent in BC? Where is the data on rents on SSI?

Finally, I believe your first priority must be to protect the natural environment. Housing solutions must be found that also meet this objective. I urge you to keep this focus as the basis of all of your decisions, use up-to-date scientific data, and protect the future of this fragile island for the generations to come. I

encourage you to search for successful, creative housing models that could be adapted for here e.g. co-ops, co-housing. We need a multi-pronged approach to address the housing needs of the different populations here including health care workers, RCMP, teachers, ferry workers, trades, store clerks, artists, small business owners, and those with mental health and addiction issues.

I am asking that you act with extreme care, particularly concerning development, up-zoning, and other essentially irreversible land use decisions.

Sincerely,
Janice Mclean

OCP supports STVR prohibition

BY PAM MISKEY

24 June 2019

Several recent submissions to the Driftwood objecting to the Islands Trust's enforcement of the bylaw prohibiting short-term vacation rent-

als have espoused dire predictions as to the demise of tourism and the resultant collapse of the island economy. These assumptions are unfounded.

Our currently zoned commercial accommodations are not yet at their zoning capacities and there is no limit to the number of B&Bs. Every official community plan that our community has produced has prohibited STVRs, especially stand-alone houses. It is difficult to conceive a more democratic process than that involved in the OCP reviews, where islanders meet for days, weeks and months to create a vision for our community. It is the responsibility of the Local Trust Committee to actualize that vision. In this matter, the Trust is not acting as a "they" imposing a prohibition, the Trust is us — we, the community.

STVRs have caused difficulties for residential neighbourhoods such as higher traffic volume and noisy parties. Residents are often disturbed by the frequent turnover of tourists, as some have occupancies of well over a dozen people. Further, since there is no one on site to inform tourists of island issues such as a limited water supply or an outdoor fire ban, there can be serious risks for the entire community.

Our OCP is very supportive of home-based businesses, including B&Bs. The prohibition of STVRs is to prevent commercial activities in residential zones. Some on and off-island investors are buying one, two, three houses each for the sole purpose of renting them commercially. They are not anyone's "home" or principal residence. Many operate as "mini hotels" with occupancies of 10 to 20 tourists nightly and advertise availability year round. Many have commercial names and professionally designed commercial websites. These commercial tourist rentals bring in upwards of three times the revenue that a residential rental would earn. Profitability is the usual motivation for engaging in illegal activity.

Contrary to some assertions that STVRs are "mortgage

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helpers" for struggling locals, there are many obvious examples of them being operated as lucrative investments. Google Airbnb, Vacation Rental to Go, Home Away and other similar

rental platforms and you will find multiple houses owned by off-island professionals and multiple houses owned by comfortably retired islanders. The advertised hundreds on these platforms do not even account for all of the STVRs. For example, a Calgary dentist can buy a Salt Spring house and only advertise it for short-term rental to his/her Alberta clients. The only people who would know that house was an STVR would be the immediate neighbours.

While STVRs are not the sole cause of our housing crisis, they are definitely a major contributing factor. The Globe and Mail reports that a recent study by McGill University researchers found that "Airbnb likely removed 31,000 homes from Canada's rental market . . . more than enough homes for everyone in North Vancouver." Communities all over the globe are attempting to curtail the STVR surge as it is removing housing from rental markets and inflating rents.

Locally, we have considerable anecdotal evidence that tenants are being evicted so that the owner can rent as an Airbnb. If the prohibition continues to be enforced, not all property owners would choose to rent residentially. Some might elect to sell, but it is implausible that investors would let their former STVR houses just sit empty.

Rather than perpetuate the alarmist fear that without STVRs "the sky will surely fall," we need to address our provable current housing crisis now. A thriving tourism sector cannot be sustained at the expense of our residential community. The fact that we are losing teachers, health-care professionals, service personnel, cooks and business employees is our present reality. If we continue to enforce the prohibition of STVRs, there is a high probability that some homes would become available to Salt Spring working people and their families.

The writer is a long-time island resident.