



STAFF REPORT

File No.: Gabriola OCP

DATE OF MEETING: February 27, 2025
TO: Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee
FROM: Narissa Chadwick, Island Planner
Local Planning Services
COPY: Renee Jamurat, Regional Planning Manager
SUBJECT: Gabriola Major Project OCP Review – Housing Section Discussion

RECOMMENDATION

- 1. That the Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee request staff draft policies for the housing section of the OCP.**

REPORT SUMMARY

This report provides a review of options for the housing section of the revised draft Gabriola OCP bylaw. It incorporates feedback from the Gabriola Visioning 2050 process, input from the Gabriola Housing Advisory Planning Commission (see Attachment 7 HAPC recommendations) and feedback from the Housing Focus Group.

Staff are seeking direction from the LTC on the overall approach, process and policy direction in order to proceed with drafting policies in the housing section of the OCP.

BACKGROUND

At the November 7, 2025 LTC regular meeting, the LTC endorsed an engagement process that included topic focussed discussions. The purpose was to enable deeper discussion on topics in smaller groups. Invitations to focus groups were sent to people who had previously expressed interest in a particular topic and groups, and individuals identified by Trustees. The focus was on trying to get a diversity of voices at each focus group table. Focus groups are limited to 12 participants. In person attendance is encouraged however, hybrid participation is available.

The Housing focus group was held on February 6th from 4pm-6pm. There were 9 community members in attendance. Given the snow at the time, a number of focus group members attended online. It was a fulsome discussion and everyone was able to participate. Following the session a summary of notes were circulated to the participants. The notes, incorporating post discussion feedback, are included in Attachment 1.

The focus group participants were provided with a package of information ahead of the discussion. This included: a copy of the draft contents page (Attachment 2), changes table (identifying changes from existing OCP) (Attachment 3), draft goals and objectives (Attachment 4), and draft policies. Staff note that the draft policies will be presented differently in the draft OCP. They were presented to the focus group and now to the Trustees in a way that the connection to objectives can be easily traced. The feedback from the Housing Advisory Planning Commission (HAPC) is also included (Attachment 5). The focus group was also provided with the Housing Discussion Guide (Attachment 6).

High level feedback from the LTC on approach and policy direction is encouraged as is feedback on process. There will be further opportunity to review the details of this section. The LTC can decide if further focused community engagement is desired and provide suggestions for engagement within existing resource constraints.

ANALYSIS

Staff are looking for support and/or direction for the draft policy and objectives and each one of the suggested changes. An overview of focus group comments is provided in detail in Attachment 1.

Draft Goal for Housing:

Support diverse, affordable, and climate-resilient housing on Gabriola Island that meets community needs, respects the island's rural character and Indigenous cultural heritage, reserves natural ecosystems, safeguards freshwater resources, and encourages housing development close to community amenities and services.

Draft Objectives:

1. Provide a range of housing options that meet the diverse needs of Gabriola Island residents, ensuring affordability and attainability for all community members.
2. Ensure that housing development is sensitive to the island's groundwater availability and sewage disposal capacity.
3. Encourage housing patterns that respect the island's rural character, prioritizing the reservation and protection of its natural environment and sites of archeological and Indigenous cultural heritage significance, biodiversity, and agricultural practices.
4. Increase housing opportunities near commercial areas and community services, where freshwater resources are sufficient and environmental impacts can be minimized.
5. Ensure housing location considers the impacts of climate change, prioritizing sites with sufficient freshwater availability, minimizing exposure to climate-related hazards such as wildfire and flooding, and incorporating resilient land-use practices that reduce vulnerability and enhance community safety.
6. Ensure that provision is made for multi-dwelling affordable and attainable housing in a manner which responds adequately to the needs of the community. (could be combined with #1)

Draft Policies

As identified below the draft policies/ policy direction that differs from the existing OCP. The proposed policies/policy direction fall into three major categories:

- Administrative Changes
 - These are changes that are administrative in nature (e.g. changing section name, moving materials in current OCP into more appropriate places like LUB of DAI bylaw)
- OCP Overarching Perspective Policies
 - These are policies that reflect key focuses for the OCP (Climate Change, Freshwater Sustainability, recognition of Indigenous cultural heritage).
- Detailed Policies
 - These are the detailed policies related to the topic. These are the policies that the focus group had the most interest in discussing.

Table 1: Draft Policy Changes

Change	Rationale/ Focus Group Comment
Administrative Changes	
Section name changed from “Residential Land Use” to “Housing” which is a subsection of “Sustainable and Resilient Communities.”	This approach aligns closely with the principles and goals emerging from the Gabriola visioning 2050 engagement process. Focus Group Comments: No discussion
Reference to requirements that fall under other jurisdictions has been removed.	Removes redundancy to streamline OCP. Focus Group Comments: No discussion
Reference to provisions that are more appropriate in the land use bylaw have been removed.	Prescriptive policies are best suited for the land use bylaw. Focus Group Comments: No discussion
Policies better suited to other sections of the OCP have been moved out of this section.	E.g. Provisions for public park, public utility, care homes in all land designations moved to “services,” references to home occupation to be moved to “economy” section. Focus Group Comments: No discussion
Policies better suited for a Development Approval Information (DAI) bylaw have been removed from the body of the OCP. Reference to the DAI bylaw will be made in the implementation section of the OCP. The DAI bylaw will be updated with the LUB.	E.g. “Where development incurs additional costs to local infrastructure, such costs shall be paid by the developer.” This kind of requirement can be identified at the time of rezoning in the absence of a DAI bylaw. A DAI bylaw can provide this direction. Focus Group Comments: No discussion

Change	Rationale/ Focus Group Comment
OCP Over Arching Perspective Policies	
Sustainability of freshwater resources is emphasized.	<p>Understanding and protecting freshwater resources has been a focus of the OCP review.</p> <p>Focus Group Comments: Solid support. Some detailed discussion regarding current water licencing challenges.</p>
Climate change consideration added.	<p>Climate change is a lens through which all policy options for the OCP are developed.</p> <p>Focus Group Comments: No discussion.</p>
Consideration of Indigenous cultural heritage is added.	<p>Indigenous cultural heritage protection is a lens through which all policy options for the OCP are developed.</p> <p>Focus Group Comments: Follow-up email from focus group member emphasizing the need for First Nations engagement and identifying that staff should begin focus group meeting with identifying what how the SFN is being engaged.</p>
Detailed Changes	
Objectives changed to focus on supporting a range of housing types to ensure affordability and attainability of housing while ensuring environmental protection, freshwater sustainability, and protection of Indigenous cultural heritage.	<p>These objectives were derived through a combination of the community visioning feedback and feedback from the HAPC.</p> <p>Focus Group Comments: Suggestion that objectives should be reviewed. In particular Objective 6 and related definitions. Concern with the use of the word “attainable” but not with the concept of supporting building multi-dwelling development of non market housing that does not fall into the category of “affordable”.</p>
Removal of current OCP restriction on multi-dwelling housing for just special needs, seniors and affordable housing to include “attainable housing”	<p>Flexibility to enable “attainable housing” helps to bridge the gap between affordable housing and market housing. Not-for-profit multi- dwelling housing proposals often include units that are below market but do not necessarily meet the definition of “affordable.”</p> <p>Focus Group Comments: See above re: “attainable housing”</p> <p>Staff note: “moderate income housing” is a potential alternative and will be defined.</p>
Density Bank has been removed.	<p>Limiting increases in density to what exists in the density bank limits housing options. The density bank as never been used.</p> <p>Focus Group Comments: No discussion</p>

Change	Rationale/ Focus Group Comment
Policies supporting small clustered housing developments (could be mobile home park).	<p>This was something identified by the HAPC, as well as through the community visioning process to be desirable.</p> <p>Focus Group Comments: Solid support of concept. Suggestion that it should not just be focussed around the village core. Other suitable areas should be considered (e.g. close to Gertie bus route). Concerns were raised about limiting the size of small clustered housing units to 500 square feet. A maximum total floor area was suggested.</p>
Exceptions related to minimum parcel size and permitted size of lot for subdivision have been made related to the provision of lots for donation to a non-profit, First Nation or government organization for the development of affordable housing.	<p>This is to help facilitate the donation of land for affordable housing to not-for-profit organizations, First Nations and government agencies.</p> <p>Focus Group Comments: No discussion</p>
Support for secondary suites or accessory dwelling unit on smaller lots if they are closer to the village	<p>This responds to recommendation made by the HAPC and feedback from community visioning that encouraged more homes within walking distance of the village.</p> <p>Focus Group Comments: General support. Conversation went beyond secondary suites and focused on co-housing models emphasizing a need to support flexibility with living arrangements (e.g. allowing two or more kitchens within a shared housing unit).</p>
Support for flexible housing included (opportunity for some lots to have more than just one accessory dwelling unit if all units are within a maximum floor area). The draft provisions extend to the Resource Zone where, currently, only one residential unit is permitted.	<p>Allows for “flexible housing” zoning to be allowed in areas where there is adequate freshwater and limited impact to the environment and cultural heritage. HAPC identified interest in increasing opportunities for building secondary suites and accessory dwelling units.</p> <p>Focus Group Comments: General support. Conversation focussed on opportunities for co-ownership of properties.</p>
Increased flexibility for residential use in commercial areas beyond one single dwelling.	<p>This was encouraged by the HAPC.</p> <p>Focus Group Comments: Suggested that residential floor area match commercial space in commercial zones.</p>
Removal of policy prohibiting strata conversion of existing buildings.	<p>HAPC identified interest in permitting strata subdivision of properties that already have a dwelling to allow for separate ownership of portions of a lot.</p> <p>Focus Group Comments: Much discussion on allowing co-ownership. Not necessarily strata ownership. This topic needs more exploration.</p>

Change	Rationale/ Focus Group Comment
Requirements for freshwater catchment systems for all new builds including secondary suites and detached dwelling units has been added.	<p>It is hoped that this provision will encourage rainwater harvesting and the retention of groundwater to support the community through times of drought.</p> <p>Focus Group Comments: Strong support. Discussion regarding interest in strong requirements for rainwater catchment accompanied by education and financial support for rainwater collection.</p> <p>Discussion regarding collaborating with the RDN to explore grants and tax breaks for those installing rainwater collection systems.</p>

Rationale for Recommendation

Requesting staff to draft the housing section of the draft OCP will support the momentum and progress? of the project. There will be many more opportunities for the LTC and the public to comment on the draft at different stages of the project.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Request further information

The LTC may request further information prior to requesting that staff draft the housing section of the OCP. As pointed out above, there will be further opportunity to discuss the proposed changes. Having a more complete set of draft policies will help to focus discussion.

2. Refer Report to the HACP

The LTC may request the report be referred to the APC before staff draft a more complete set of housing policies.

NEXT STEPS

If the staff recommendation is supported:

- Community survey data will be collected, analyses and points relating to housing will be identified when draft policies are presented.
- A revised draft of the goals, objectives and policies created based on focus group, Trustee and survey feedback.
- Draft housing policies will be presented in the revised draft OCP which will be provided to the LTC for review, discussion and decision on whether further review is needed or if goals, objectives and policies can be moved forward into the draft bylaw.
- Additional engagement will be facilitated by staff as determined by the LTC.
- A full draft of the OCP will be compiled for review by the LTC and the Snuneymuxw First Nation.
- The revised OCP will be read for the first time.
- The revised OCP will be sent out for referral.
- Public engagement on draft OCP will happen through the summer.

- Community information meeting, public hearing and further readings of the bylaw.
- Bylaw will be sent to the Islands Trust Executive for endorsement.
- Bylaw will be sent to the Ministry of Housing and Municipal Affairs for endorsement.
- Bylaw adoption.

Submitted By:	Narissa Chadwick RPP MCIP, Island Planner	February 19, 2025
Concurrence:	Renée Jamurat, RPP MCIP, Regional Planning Manager	February 19, 2025

ATTACHMENTS

1. Notes from Housing Focus Group
2. Draft OCP Table of Contents
3. OCP Changes Table
4. Draft Housing Goals and Objectives
5. Draft Housing Policies
6. Housing Discussion Guide
7. HAPC Recommendations

ATTACHMENT 1

Focus Group Discussion Notes

Date: February 6th 2025 Discussion Topic Themes

1. Housing Models & Typology

Housing types discussed by focus group participants:

- Co-housing, Shared apartments/housing, Co-ops, Intentional communities, Ecovillages, Multifamily homes, Duplexes, Secondary suites (for income generation), Rentals

Key concerns/reflections around housing typologies & models:

- Shared housing models need to account for water access, especially with current challenges from a water licensing perspective that might hinder flexible housing options.
- Concern regarding limits on tiny home size. Suggestion the total square footage for a lot allow for multiple tiny homes of different sizes adding up to the total size limit, rather than restricting each unit to 500 sq. ft.
- 'Clustered' Housing:
 - Not just focused near the village core, but also in other areas with potential for multi-dwelling housing (consider locations along Gertie bus route).
 - Pockets of multi-dwelling housing should be considered in areas with access to amenities.
 - Concerns raised around developments near existing trees and water availability (e.g., Paisley Place).
 - Interest in shared services (e.g., septic, water) and ensuring flexibility in housing types, not just tiny homes or RVs.
 - Shared water and septic systems will be important for supporting density.
 - Potential Areas:
 - Gertie bus route, Easthom Road at Harrison (10-acre parcel, co-housing group interest).
 - South end of the island could be suitable if there were more amenities.

2. Water Availability Reflections

- Ensure that cisterns are not part of calculation of total floor area
- Without a clear understanding of the current water state, it is difficult to form a solid opinion on village core density.
- Explicit policy language around rainwater collection systems for potable water could be added.
- Interest in LTC collaborating with RDN to explore potential for grants and tax breaks for those who install potable rainwater collection systems.
- Rainwater collection is currently under Island Health, potable water use regulations are challenging to address.
 - There is a need to consider flexibility in housing options related to water use.
 - Pilot Project: Could Pender Island cistern requirements be replicated on Gabriola?

3. Housing Models & Strategies for Flexibility

- Co-housing & Shared Housing:
 - Current zoning and policy restrictions limit flexibility in co-housing models, particularly around shared kitchens. (Example: Co-housing projects in Vancouver face significant restrictions, including prohibiting multiple kitchens).
 - Proposal to allow two or more shared kitchens within a shared housing unit.
 - Co-ownership (not OCP/LUB): Expanding the model where multiple individuals hold a single deed. This includes supporting partnerships in shared housing and exploring ways to legally accommodate co-ownership of housing.
 - Allow more than one owner on the title, including for caretakers or support staff in co-housing environments

4. Commercial Properties

- Commercial-to-Residential Transition:
 - Encourage the integration of residential floor areas to match the floor area of commercial spaces on commercial properties, particularly in areas with high commercial activity.

5. Location of and Size of Lots for Increased Density

- Potential Locations for “Cluster Housing”:
 - Locations based on access to amenities, reducing transportation reliance, and adequate water
- Consider 1-hectare properties subject to water limits
- Locations close to the ferry terminal
- South end of the island, contingent on additional amenities.
- Example of potential cluster housing location: East Holm at Harrison Road (10 acres with 5 wells).

6. Policy Considerations & Language

- Policy Language Feedback:
 - Policies should be specific and measurable
 - Objective 3: Concern over vague language such as “consider.” The group suggests shifting from language like “consider” to stronger terms like “must consider.”
 - Concern with the use of the word “attainable” in Objective 6
 - Discussion around whether certain issues should be left to decision-makers or should be more clearly defined in policy to ensure consistency.

6. Housing Policy Concerns

- Illegal Housing & Permits:
 - There is a need to create pathways for illegal housing to be legalized through proper permits and bylaw support.
- House Size and Use:
 - Concerns that larger homes are underutilized. Some islands, such as North Pender, are considering policies that impose limits on maximum floor area for houses. Maximum floor area was proposed for Gabriola too.
 - There was also discussion about whether restricting the number of bathrooms would be an effective measure.

7. Advocacy & Policy Recommendations in Addition to the Draft Objectives

- Feedback on Objective 6: Affordable Housing Definitions:
 - In the current Official Community Plan (OCP), there's a push to use clearer language around affordable housing rather than "attainable housing," which lacks a clear definition.
- Speculation and Vacancy Tax:
 - Advocacy for expanding speculation and vacancy tax policies to include Gabriola Island.

8. Other Topics

- Population Assumptions:
 - Discussion on whether there is an underlying assumption that the population will increase, and how this should affect housing strategies.
- There was a suggestion for multiple seniors or support staff to live in the same house. This could include a mix of market-value units and subsidized units.
- Discussion about barged in homes. Staff identified that these fall under building code. Consideration should be given to homes that are barged in as new builds.
- Gabriola LTC to lobby the RDN for subsidies and support for rainwater collection systems.

Meeting Conclusion:

- The meeting concluded with a consensus on the need for more flexible housing policies, clearer language in the OCP, and a strong focus on water availability, rainwater collection, and shared housing models to meet the community's evolving needs.

Attachment 2: Draft Table of Contents

This is a draft table of contents for the Gabriola OCP review. While it will provide a framework for engagement and bylaw writing, it may change over time depending on how the work evolves. If you are participating in a focus group, the section relevant to your conversation is highlighted.

PART 1 – GOVERNANCE AND PLANNING CONTEXT

- 1.1 What is an OCP
- 1.2 Community Consultation
- 1.3 Plan Structure

PART 2- COMMUNITY CONTEXT

- 2.1 Community Context
- 2.2 Housing Needs

PART 3 – COMMUNITY VISION AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- 3.1 Vision
- 3.2 Principles

PART 4 – LAND USE OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

- 4.1 Cultural Heritage
- 4.2 Climate Resilience
- 4.3 Healthy and Biodiverse Ecosystems
- 4.4 Resource Stewardship
- 4.5 Sustainable, Inclusive and Resilient Communities

PART 5 - IMPLEMENTATION

- 5. 1 Development Permit Areas
- 5.2 Temporary Use Permits
- 5.3 Advocacy Policies

Attachment 3: Changes Table

The proposed changes to Official Community Plan (OCP) policy related to housing are quite extensive to address housing need, the Housing Advisory Planning Commission's (HAPC) recommendations, and feedback received through the Gabriola Visioning 2050 process. A summary of what the current OCP contains and some of the related issues can be found in the [Housing Discussion Guide](#) online and in Attachment 5.

Change	Rationale
Section name changed from "Residential Land Use" to "Housing" which is a subsection of "Sustainable and Resilient Communities."	This approach aligns closely with the principles and goals emerging from the Gabriola visioning 2050 engagement process.
Goal was added which focusses on meeting community needs while respecting rural character, cultural heritage, ecosystems, and freshwater resources.	Goals are included for all sections of the new OCP and were developed based on feedback from the community visioning process.
Objectives changed to focus on supporting a range of housing types to ensure affordability and attainability of housing while ensuring environmental protection, freshwater sustainability, and protection of Indigenous cultural heritage.	These objectives were derived through a combination of the community visioning feedback and feedback from the HAPC.
Removal of current OCP restriction on multi-dwelling housing for just special needs, seniors and affordable housing to include "attainable housing."	Flexibility to enable "attainable housing" helps to bridge the gap between affordable housing and market housing. Not-for-profit multi-dwelling housing proposals often include units that are below market but do not necessarily meet the definition of "affordable."
Provisions are made for small clustered housing developments (could be mobile home park).	This was something identified by the HAPC, as well as through the community visioning process.
Sustainability of freshwater resources is emphasized.	Understanding and protecting freshwater resources has been a focus of the OCP review.
Climate change consideration added.	Climate change is a lens through which all policy options for the OCP are developed.
Consideration of Indigenous cultural heritage is added.	Indigenous cultural heritage protection is a lens through which all policy options for the OCP are developed.
Density Bank has been removed.	Limiting increases in density to what exists in the density bank limits housing options. The density bank as never been used.
Reference to requirements that fall under other jurisdictions has been removed.	Removes redundancy to streamline OCP.

Change	Rationale
Reference to provisions that are more appropriate in the land use bylaw have been removed.	Prescriptive policies are best suited for the land use bylaw.
Policies better suited to other sections of the OCP have been moved out of this section.	E.g. Provisions for public park, public utility, care homes in all land designations moved to “services,” references to home occupation to be moved to “economy” section.
Policies better suited for a Development Approval Information (DAI) bylaw have been removed from the body of the OCP. Reference to the DAI bylaw will be made in the implementation section of the OCP. The DAI bylaw will be updated with the LUB.	E.g. “Where development incurs additional costs to local infrastructure, such costs shall be paid by the developer.” This kind of requirement can be identified at the time of rezoning in the absence of a DAI bylaw. A DAI bylaw can provide this direction.
Exceptions related to minimum parcel size and permitted size of lot for subdivision have been made related to the provision of lots for donation to a non-profit, First Nation or government organization for the development of affordable housing.	This is to help facilitate the donation of land for affordable housing to not-for-profit organizations, First Nations and government agencies.
Support for secondary suites or accessory dwelling unit on smaller lots if they are closer to the village	This responds to recommendation made by the HAPC and feedback from community visioning that encouraged more homes within walking distance of the village.
Support for flexible housing included (opportunity for some lots to have more than just one accessory dwelling unit if all units are within a maximum floor area). The draft provisions extend to the Resource Zone where, currently, only one residential unit is permitted.	Allows for “flexible housing” zoning to be allowed in areas where there is adequate freshwater and limited impact to the environment and cultural heritage. HAPC identified interest in increasing opportunities for building secondary suites and accessory dwelling units.
Increased flexibility for residential use in commercial areas beyond one single dwelling.	This was encouraged by the HAPC.
Removal of policy prohibiting strata conversion of existing buildings.	HAPC identified interest in permitting strata subdivision of properties that already have a dwelling to allow for separate ownership of portions of a lot.
Requirements for freshwater catchment systems for all new builds including secondary suites and detached dwelling units has been added.	It is hoped that this provision will encourage rainwater harvesting and the retention of groundwater to support the community through times of drought.

Attachment 4: Goals and Objectives for Housing

The purpose of this worksheet is to present draft goals and objectives for discussion. Draft goals and objectives have been created based on feedback from the Gabriola public during the Gabriola Visioning 2050 process, as well as through feedback from the Housing Advisory Planning Commission (HAPC). This feedback was gathered from September 2023 – September 2024.

Draft Goal for Housing:

Support diverse, affordable, and climate-resilient housing on Gabriola Island that meets community needs, respects the island's rural character and Indigenous cultural heritage, preserves natural ecosystems, safeguards freshwater resources, and encourages housing development close to community amenities and services.

Draft Objectives:

1. **Provide a range of housing options that meet the diverse needs of Gabriola Island residents, ensuring affordability and attainability for all community members.**
2. **Ensure that housing development is sensitive to the island's groundwater availability and sewage disposal capacity.**
3. **Encourage housing patterns that respect the island's rural character, prioritizing the preservation and protection of its natural environment and sites of archeological and Indigenous cultural heritage significance, biodiversity, and agricultural practices.**
4. **Increase housing opportunities near commercial areas and community services, where freshwater resources are sufficient and environmental impacts can be minimized.**
5. **Ensure housing location considers the impacts of climate change, prioritizing sites with sufficient freshwater availability, minimizing exposure to climate-related hazards such as wildfire and flooding, and incorporating resilient land-use practices that reduce vulnerability and enhance community safety.**
6. **Ensure that provision is made for multi-dwelling affordable and attainable housing in a manner which responds adequately to the needs of the community.**

Attachment 5: Draft Objectives and Policies

The draft op have been created based on a review of existing policies related to housing and feedback from the Gabriola Public during the Gabriola Visioning 2050 process as well as feedback from the Housing Advisory Planning Commission (HAPC). There are some substantial changes presented. How these proposed policies differ from the existing OCP is outlined in Attachment 2.

Objective 1:

Provide a range of housing options that meet the diverse needs of Gabriola Island residents, ensuring affordability and attainability for all community members.

Policies:

- One Secondary suite or detached accessory dwelling unit is permitted on parcels 2.0 hectares (4.94 acres) or larger except:
 - On properties within Xkm of Commercial (Village) (C(V)) where one secondary suite or detached dwelling unit is permitted on parcels 1.0 hectares (2.47 acres; and
 - Where regulations permit multiple accessory dwelling units while limiting total combined floor area of all units.
 - Clustered small-unit affordable housing (modular homes, tiny homes, mobile homes) can be considered for affordable, attainable, or special needs housing, with units not exceeding 500 sq. ft.
 - Rezoning for multi-dwelling developments and small-unit clustered housing is permitted only for affordable, attainable, or special needs housing, with a housing agreement to ensure long-term affordability.
 - Permit shared amenities (laundry, workshops, kitchens) in clustered small-unit housing developments to enhance community living.
 - Ensure multi-dwelling housing developments are limited to 12 units per hectare and 24 units per development, with units not exceeding 83 sq. m (900 sq. ft.), and located near services and community amenities.
 - Up to half of the total floor area of a building designated commercial is permitted to support residential use.
 - One single family residential unit may be permitted in the resource zone except where regulations permit multiple accessory dwelling units while limiting total combined floor area of all dwellings.
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Objective 2:

Ensure that housing development is sensitive to the island's groundwater availability and sewage disposal capacity.

Policies to Follow:

- Require proof of adequate water supply and septic capacity for all developments, including secondary suites, accessory dwellings, and clustered housing units.
 - Rezoning proposals for multi-dwelling housing must assess the adequacy of freshwater supply and the impacts to the groundwater aquifer.
 - Ensure clustered small-unit housing units are directly connected to water and wastewater systems.
 - A freshwater catchment system shall be required prior to the construction of all new builds including secondary suite and/or detached accessory dwelling units in all zones.
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Objective 3:

Encourage housing patterns that respect the island's rural character and Indigenous cultural heritage, prioritizing the preservation and protection of its natural environment and sites of archeological and Indigenous cultural heritage significance, biodiversity, and agricultural practices.

Policies:

- Encourage lot clustering as a means to preserve large remainder lots, reduce environmental impacts, and protect the natural landscape.
- Develop zoning regulations that limit site coverage and floor area to maintain the rural character and protect natural resources.
- Consider the Indigenous archeological and Indigenous cultural heritage interests in zoning regulations.
- *Except for the purposes of allowing donation of land to a non-profit, government, or First Nation organization for affordable housing development:*
 - *Small Rural Residential: Minimum parcel size is 0.5 hectares (1.235 acres); average parcel size is 2.0 hectares (4.94 acres).*
 - *Large Rural Residential: Minimum parcel size is 2.0 hectares (4.94 acres); average parcel size is 4.0 hectares (9.88 acres).*
- A parcel shall not be subdivided unless:
 - in the case of a parcel in the Primary Forestry zone, the remainder of the parent parcel equals or exceeds the minimum parcel size permitted in the zoning bylaw;
 - in the case of all other parcels in the planning area, the parcel being subdivided is 80 ha. (197.6 ac) or larger except for the purposes of allowing the donation of land to a not for profit, government or First Nation organization for the development of affordable housing.

- Rezoning for multi-dwelling and clustered housing should include plans for environmental sensitivity, including covenants to protect environmentally sensitive areas and mitigate impacts.
 - Ensure clustered small-unit housing is located within proximity to roadways and includes screening to minimize visual and environmental impacts on surrounding properties.
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Objective 4:

Increase housing opportunities near commercial areas and community services, where freshwater resources are sufficient, and environmental impacts can be minimized.

Policies:

- Multi-dwelling housing should be located within a 2 km walking distance of services, with access to pedestrian and cycling routes.
 - Clustered small-unit housing should be concentrated in specific areas near roadways and connected to community infrastructure.
 - Rezoning for multi-dwelling housing is encouraged near commercial centers, provided there is adequate access to freshwater, and the development minimizes environmental impacts.
 - Consider density transfer to concentrate housing near commercial and service areas while preserving rural landscapes.
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Objective 5:

Ensure housing location considers the impacts of climate change, prioritizing sites with sufficient freshwater availability, minimizing exposure to climate-related hazards such as wildfire and flooding, and incorporating resilient land-use practices that reduce vulnerability and enhance community safety.

Policies:

- At the time of the development of new parcels of 2.0 hectares (4.94 acres) or smaller in areas designated as residential, an integrated storm water management plan should be designed, constructed and maintained.
- Multi-dwelling housing developments must assess and plan for climate change impacts, including the risks of flooding, wildfire, and other hazards.
- Rezoning for clustered housing and multi-dwelling developments should prioritize locations that are near community services without compromising the environment or freshwater resources.
- All developments must consider adequate fire suppression water supply, particularly for subdivisions creating 10 or more parcels.
- Rezoning applications must provide evidence of adequate freshwater supply, sewage disposal capacity, and understanding of environmental impacts, with mitigation strategies to reduce harm.

- Require setbacks and site-specific designs to mitigate flooding risks and sea-level rise effects, especially along the foreshore and coastal areas.
 - Ensure emergency access routes and evacuation plans are in place for developments at risk of climate-related hazards.
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Objective 6:

To ensure that provision is made for Multi-dwelling Affordable, Attainable Housing and Special Needs housing in a manner which responds adequately to the needs of the community without compromising protection of the natural environment, and sustainability of freshwater resources.

Attainable Housing is housing that is financially accessible to individuals and families earning a moderate income, enabling them to live and work within their community without undue financial strain. It often bridges the gap between affordable housing and market-rate housing.

Affordable Housing is housing where costs (including rent or mortgage, utilities, and other related expenses) that do not exceed 30% of a household's gross income, ensuring basic needs can still be met without financial hardship.

Special Needs Housing is housing designed or adapted to meet the specific needs of individuals with unique challenges, such as seniors, people with disabilities, or those requiring supportive living arrangements, ensuring safety, accessibility, and dignity.

Policies:

- Encourage the development of multi-dwelling housing, including clustered small unit housing, that is affordable and meets the community's needs, ensuring long-term affordability through housing agreements.
- Consider proposals for special needs housing and seniors' housing, with appropriate rezoning to allow for boarding homes or multi-dwelling developments, subject to community needs assessments.
- Multi-unit housing developments should not exceed 12 units per hectare and 24 units per development.
- Ensure housing agreements for multi-dwelling housing are in place to maintain affordability over time and support non-market rental or ownership housing as an amenity during rezoning.



Islands Trust

GABRIOLA OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN REVIEW

Discussion Guides

HOUSING



November 2024

What is a Discussion Guide?

The Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee is updating the Official Community Plan (OCP) – which guides development to align with the community’s vision and values on a variety of topics. This guide is designed to provide community members with background needed to provide feedback on policy options related to housing.

Share your thoughts through focus groups, direct communication with the Local Trust Committee and the Gabriola OCP Review Topic-Focused Engagement online survey (December 2024 - April 2025).

What is an Official Community Plan (OCP) for Gabriola Island?

The OCP implements the community’s vision.

It provides a long-term strategy for land use management, outlining broad objectives and policies to guide future growth and development of the community.

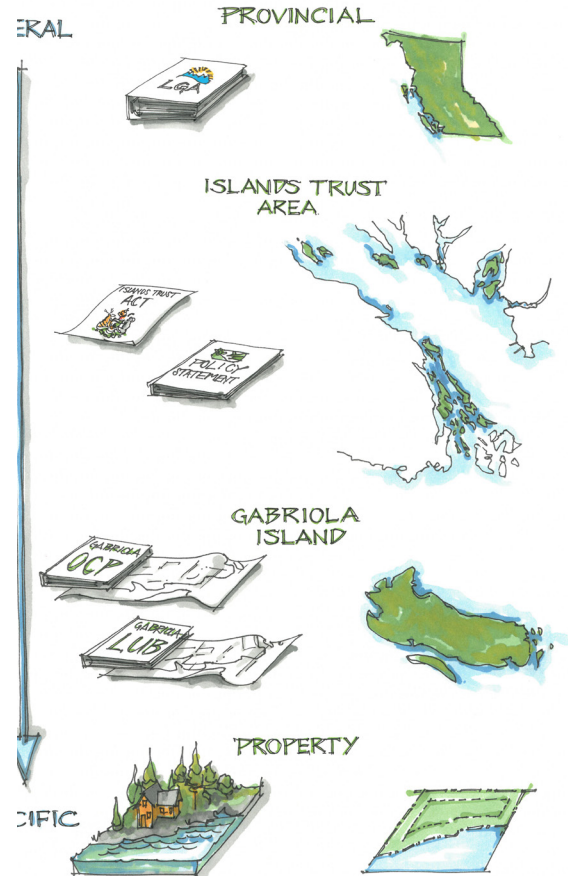
The OCP must align with higher level policies.

These include the Local Government Act, the Islands Trust Act, and the Islands Trust Policy Statement. This ensures that local plans are consistent with regional and provincial directives.

What is NOT part of an Official Community Plan for Gabriola Island?

The OCP is not a zoning bylaw or detailed regulatory document. Specific regulations and enforcement mechanisms are found in the Land Use Bylaw (LUB) and must be consistent with the OCP.

The OCP does not include the provision of infrastructure or services. Infrastructure such as sewer, or roads, and community services within the Islands Trust Area are the responsibility of other levels of government.



Legislation and Policy Influencing Land Use

What does the current OCP say about housing?

Housing policy in the OCP focuses on gradual growth and change with a key focus on preserving and protecting the environment. It emphasises that no additional land should be designated for residential use and limits the creation of new small lot residential areas.

Multi-dwelling residential developments on Gabriola Island are allowed only for special needs residents, seniors, or as affordable housing. "Affordable housing" refers to homes rented or owned under a housing agreement that's registered on title in favor of the Local Trust Committee.

The Official Community Plan (OCP) sets specific conditions for affordable housing developments, such as being near the village core and having access to a sufficient water supply. These developments can include up to 12 residential units per hectare, with a maximum of 24 units in a single project. Each unit can be no larger than 900 square feet, which is roughly the size of a two-bedroom suite.

Secondary suites are permitted on properties that are 2 hectares (5 acres) or larger. Separate accessory dwelling units (ADUs) are considered single-family affordable housing and are also permitted on properties that are 2 hectares (5 acres) or larger, but should not exceed 65 square metres (700 square feet).

In addition to these options, one residential unit is permitted in commercial, resource, forestry and residential land use designations. Community care facility licensed group homes are permitted in any land use designation where single dwelling residential use is permitted.

Mobile home parks or clusters of small homes (on wheels or otherwise) are not currently allowed under the OCP. Additionally, the OCP prohibits strata conversions of existing buildings, which means individual ownership of separate units in an existing building is not supported.

Exploring housing

The Gabriola Island OCP's conservative approach to increasing housing density is partially based on the assumption that densities existing on undeveloped land can accommodate housing needs. Increases in property and building costs over the past two decades has led to property/housing ownership being out of range for many earning a low to moderate income. While there are close to 600 undeveloped parcels of land these are likely not accessible to many residents who currently reside or work in the community.

In a 2018 engagement, community members identified unaffordable housing relative to income, lack of available housing options, and insecure tenure as the top three challenges to housing on Gabriola Island (Dillon, 2018). Housing insecurity has led to Gabriola Island residents living in tiny homes, in cars, and in illegal dwellings. Gabriola Island continues to experience decreases in affordable housing options.

In 2019, the Gabriola Island Local Trust Council (LTC) began its Housing Options and Impacts Review Project with a focus on developing new policies and regulations to promote an increase in housing options on Gabriola Island. The recommendations also considered protection of the island's groundwater supply, biodiversity and sensitive ecosystems. The Housing Options and Impacts Review Project led to a series of land use planning recommendations, with further recommendations coming from the Housing Advisory Planning Commission (HAPC).

What we heard about housing

What were the Housing Advisory Planning Commission (HAPC)'s recommendations?

The Gabriola HAPC met several times in late 2023 and early 2024 to consider a range of housing options. The HAPC had several recommendations related to the OCP:

- Increasing density in the village core by increasing the permitted number of dwelling units on all parcels over 1 ha
- Increasing the number of residential units allowed within commercial developments to be proportional to the commercial floor area
- Zoning suitable properties in the village core to increase residential density and allow for mixed market and affordable housing
- Increasing opportunities for building secondary suites and accessory dwelling units
- Permitting alternative forms of housing (e.g. tiny homes and RVs)
- Creating zoning for clusters of manufactured tiny and mobile homes
- Permitting strata subdivision of properties that already have a dwelling, allowing for separate ownership of portions of a lot

What we heard from the community

The Gabriola community engaged in a community visioning process September 2023- April 2024. Through this process, the values of the Gabriola community and their principles and goals emerged.

Social equity and wellbeing was identified as a key value. A diversity of housing options was identified as an important component of social equity and well being. Community members identified a need for accessible and affordable housing. This focus supports the community identified principles of community resilience and equity and the goal of supporting a sustainable and resilient community.

For details on community visioning and resulting goals and principle see: <https://islandstrust.bc.ca/document/gabriola-visioning-2050-what-we-heard-report/>

Density Bank and Density Transfer

The density bank and density transfer policies in the current OCP are related to how much additional housing there can be on Gabriola and how the number of properties for housing can be increased in some areas.

What is a Density Bank?

The Density bank is a tool which enables residential densities from land that will not be developed to be deposited in to a “bank” to be withdrawn in the future for use in creating multi-unit special needs seniors and affordable housing.

Withdrawing densities from the density bank requires that a housing agreement be in place. Adding and removing densities from the density bank is done through the rezoning and OCP amendment process.

There are not currently any densities in the density bank. The density bank has never been used.

What is Density Transfer?

On Gabriola Island, the only way additional subdivision potential for residential lots can be created is through density transfer. Density transfer only applies to land within the Resource and Forestry Land Use Designations. It allows for residential density to be transferred from large parcels of land to other areas of the Island which enables the creation of additional residential lots. In both the Resource and Forestry Land Use Designations, for every 8 hectares of land that is conserved, one residential density may be transferred to land in the Resource zone.

Density transfers involve a donor parcel and a receiver parcel. Through the density transfer, the donor parcel becomes conservation land and the receiver parcel is given the zoning to be subdivided beyond what was previously permitted. Each lot that is subdivided is permitted one principal dwelling. On lots 2 hectares or larger a secondary suite is also permitted.

Exploration of Density Transfer and Density Bank

Strengths:

- Density transfer and density bank policies are designed with ecological protection in mind.
- Density Transfers focus residential development in a specific area and preserve large blocks of land with significant environmental features, archaeological sites and/or forested area.
- Both “density transfers” and the “density bank” aim to focus residential development in areas which are more suitable for development in order to preserve other areas which should remain undeveloped or used for non-residential purposes.

Weaknesses:

- The principles and values that inform the density transfer and density bank policies are compelling, but are cumbersome to apply.
- Density transfer and density bank policies do not allow for a net increase in density.
- Density transfer and density bank policies place a cap on housing supply which can result in stagnant supply and contribute to increasing property costs.
- The density bank has never been used.

How do you feel about housing as it relates to the OCP?

We want to hear from you!

The survey is open to all Gabriola residents! Answer the survey to tell us what you think about housing, or any of the other topics that Gabriola residents told us is important during the last round of engagement. Complete the survey online, or contact Islands Trust to complete a paper version of the survey.

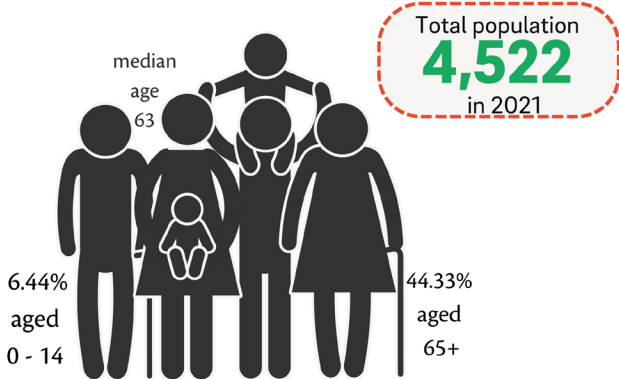
Stay up to date by subscribing to updates or following along on the project page:
islandstrust.bc.ca/island-planning/gabriola/projects/gabriola-ocpreview



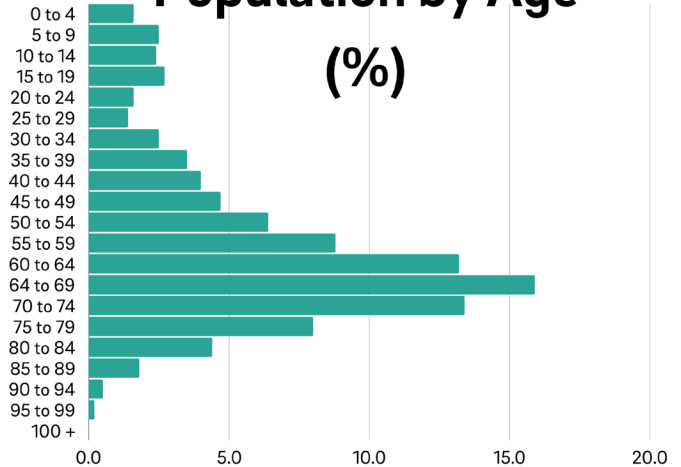
GABRIOLA ISLAND community snapshot DEMOGRAPHICS



At a Glance



Population by Age



1
in every
2.3
residents
is over the age of 65+

66%
of the current
population will be
85+
by 2050

People on the Move

Of the 1,250 people who changed residences on Island between 2011 and 2016,

68%

relocated to the Island from another community

Of the 1,460 people who changed residences on Island between 2016 and 2021,

84%

relocated to the Island from another community

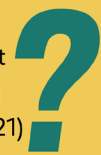
Households



2 people (48.42%) average household size
215 (9%) two parent household with children
130 (5.5%) one parent household with children
2,375 total households

Did you know...

Nanaimo is in the top 5 fastest growing metropolitan areas in Canada (+10% from 2016-2021)



References:
 2016 Source: Statistics Canada
 2021 Source: Statistics Canada

GABRIOLA ISLAND LTA community snapshot HOUSING



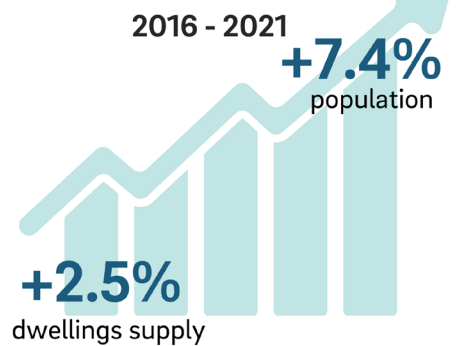
Residential Housing

- Single detached homes
- Semi-detached homes
- Multi-unit dwellings
- Movable dwellings
- Other single-attached houses
- Apartment or flat in a duplex



Did you know...
52% of renters are spending 30% or more of their income on housing costs

Growth Changes

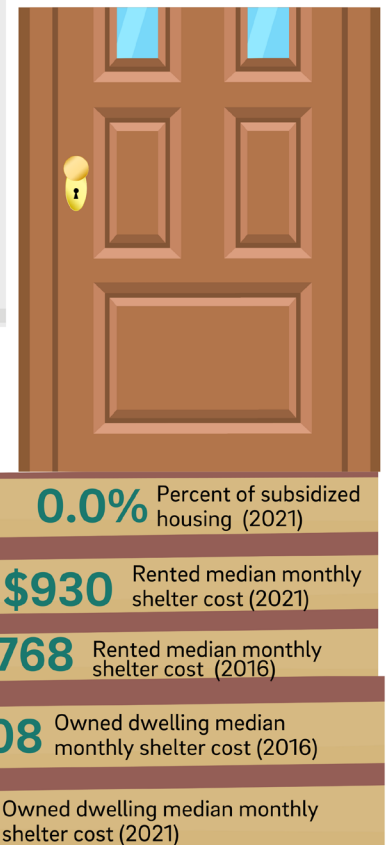


Unhoused Population



Includes individuals without permanent housing, those living in cars, couch surfing, or residing in homes without essential utilities like a bathroom or kitchen.

Cost of Shelter Trends



Renters vs. Owners

11% of households rent

89% of households own

42% renters in core housing need

8% of home owners are in core housing need

Residential Availability



Reference & Sources:
Gabriola Health and Wellness Report 2024
Statistics Canada 2021
Statistics Canada 2016

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

- REDUCE climate impact**
- WATER** monitoring for the coming GENERATIONS
- OCEAN Stewardship** What does this mean for SEWERAGE??
- WILDLIFE CORRIDOR** PROTECT THE FORESTS and the FURRED, FINNED & FEATHERED & SLITHERY
- #1 VALUE** ESPECIALLY when conflicts with other VALUED SERVICES
- YOUTH INVOLVEMENT!**
- SPECIES at RISK over 200 species ENDANGERED** ISLANDS TRUST Should PRESERVE + PROTECT
- LEARN about specific SPECIES!** HOACKIA (type of flower)

COMMUNITY

- continued COMMUNITY conversations
- PARTNERSHIPS** WITH FIRST NATIONS & Building Relationships
- EDUCATION** REGULATION
- VOLUNTEER SUPPORT**
- DATA DRIVEN DECISION MAKING** 50%
- INCLUSIVE** Ways to Provide AWARENESS
- ATTRACT TO THE ISLAND ARTISTS**
- WORKSPAK** for

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

- ACCESSIBLE & DIVERSE HOUSING** and WORKSPACES
- SAFETY** for everyone
- RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES** for everyone
- ACCESS TO BEACH**
- IMPROVED PUBLIC TRANSIT**
- PATHS IMPROVED** CYCLING & WALKING

CLIMATE LENS

- LIMITS TO GROWTH?** NATURAL ENVIRONMENT & BUILT ENVIRONMENT THEY ARE INTERDEPENDANT!!
- LIMIT URBANIZATION?**

FIRST NATION RECONCILIATION & INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVES



Learn more about next steps in the OCP review process



Participate in the topic-focused survey

Gabriola Housing Advisory Planning Commission

Options for increasing the availability and affordability of housing on Gabriola Island, 2024

The Gabriola HAPC met several times in late 2023 and early 2024 to consider a range of options that could be implemented by the Local Trust Committee (LTC) in order to increase the supply of housing, and especially affordable housing, on Gabriola Island. The Islands Trust’s Housing Options Toolkit¹ was an important source of information for this exercise.

Many of the following proposals have the potential to result in increased density on specific properties. We propose to the LTC that questions around density should be considered on the basis of site-specific parameters, including water availability, septic capacity, ecosystem values, ecosystem preservation and restoration plans, and proximity to amenities, and that these parameters must be demonstrated by the proponent. Limitations to the number of residents on an existing property and on a new development should be considered on the basis of these factors rather than on familial relationships.

Proposal	Rationale
1) We ask the LTC to request that Trust Council lobby the provincial government to extend the Speculation and Vacancy Tax ² (a.k.a. Empty Homes Tax) to the Gabriola Island Trust Area, with the hope that it might be extended to all parts of the Trust area that agree to it.	There are dozens if not hundreds of Gabriola dwellings that remain empty for most of the year. Many of these would be suitable as rental accommodations, or if the owners don’t want to pay the tax, they might be sold to someone who needs a place to live. Revenue from the tax would be transferred to an affordable housing fund for Gabriola.
2) We ask the LTC to make changes to allow increased density in the Village Core ³ area, by increasing the permitted number of dwelling units on all parcels over 1 ha.	If we increase allowable density in the core area there should be less pressure to build out to maximum possible density in the more rural parts of the island. Concentration of density in the core area also reduces the need for transportation.
3) We ask the LTC to increase the number of allowed residential units within commercial developments. The number of units should be proportional to the commercial floor area.	At present only 1 residential unit is allowed on each commercial property. Commercial developers have made it clear that it is not cost-effective to build residential units under that constraint.
4) We ask the LTC to proactively up-zone suitable properties in the Village Core area to allow for market rate multi-family residential development with stipulation	Property owners in the Village Core may be encouraged to build multi-family housing.

¹ <https://islandstrust.bc.ca/document/housing-options-toolkit-tools-1-10/>

² <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/taxes/speculation-vacancy-tax>

³ Defined in the Gabriola OCP as within 0.5 kilometres of the Village Core bounded by North, South, and Lockinvar Roads or within a 2 kilometre walking distance from the Village Core along public access routes only.

that a proportion of dwellings must be rented below market value.	
5) We ask the LTC to increase options for additional residences in all parts of the island by expanding the types of properties where secondary suites and Accessory Dwelling Units are permitted.	More housing is needed on Gabriola, and this ties in with the new forgivable \$40,000 loan from the Province.
6) We ask the LTC to do what is needed to make alternative dwelling units (that meet provincial and federal construction standards) possible, either on their own or in addition to a primary residence.	A tiny home (or other alternative dwelling unit) is a place to live for someone who doesn't have other viable options (or even for someone who does). It is a much better option than sleeping in a car or on someone's couch or in a tent.
7) We ask the LTC to create zoning for clusters of manufactured, tiny and mobile homes that meet provincial and federal construction standards.	There is a high proportion of unhoused or inadequately housed residents on Gabriola. This problem will not be solved by ignoring it.
8) We ask the LTC to create a way to allow bare-land stratification of a property that already has a dwelling.	Bare-land stratification allows for a separate ownership of a portion of a property, without increasing density, and so can facilitate and incentivize construction of an additional residence.

February 23, 2024

Housing Advisory Planning Commission members

- Felix Addison
- Emily Carson-Apstein
- Ardith Cooper
- Steven Earle (chair)
- Jenni Gehlbach
- Angela Pounds
- Dylan Wallinger
- John Woods