

DATE OF MEETING: June 26, 2025

TO: Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee

FROM: Narissa Chadwick RPP MCIP, Islands Planner/ Stephen Baugh, Island Planner
Local Planning Services

COPY: Renee Jamurat, Regional Planning Manager

SUBJECT: Gabriola OCP Review – Engagement process

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee endorse the revised approach to the next phase in community engagement for the Gabriola OCP Review project as presented in the June 26th staff report.

REPORT SUMMARY

This report introduces a revised approach to summer engagement related to the Gabriola OCP review which focusses on key questions related to housing options and growth management.

BACKGROUND

At their May 22nd, 2025 Local Trust Committee meeting, the Gabriola LTC requested staff prepare draft policy language related to resource stewardship, freshwater and environment for broader public review. This draft policy language would incorporate the feedback from the focus groups and the survey results. The LTC also endorsed an OCP project summer engagement plan.

ANALYSIS

As staff have begun to review and feedback and revise policy language there are two key considerations that have emerged.

First - This OCP review offers an opportunity to develop a model policy document that is integrated and focused. Given this, an approach to organizing the document that removes repetition and is easy to follow for the public, the LTC and for planners is recommended. Rather than gathering more input on key themes, staff would like to take the time to organize the policies in a way that is clear to understand and designed to be easily applied when land use changes are proposed through applications and projects. The content of the document in its intended format can then be used to engage the public once a draft is produced. In the meantime, there is an opportunity to seek feedback from the community on specific questions (identified below) related to key issues.

Second - Community feedback identifies that a key topic is related to providing affordable and attainable housing in ways that balance the preservation and protection of the environment. In particular, there are concerns about the cumulative impacts of introducing opportunities for multiple small dwellings on a property.

Leading up to the workshop in September, which will focus on housing options and growth management, staff are recommending community engagement that is focused on policy options that seek to balance support for attainable and affordable housing with preservation and protection of the natural environment. Ideas that would be presented for feedback include:

1. The removal of subdivision potential except for the purposes of line adjustment, lot consolidation, building strata and allowing the donation of land for affordable housing development for a public park, or a conservation area.
2. Supporting rezoning applications for several small homes—either attached or detached—to be grouped together on one lot without subdividing the land. A variation of this concept could include a maximum combined floor area for the dwellings. This approach addressed feedback we have heard to date as it provides an opportunity for shared land arrangements as well potentially facilitating more rental options. Additionally, rezoning applications provide opportunities for conservation covenants, housing agreements, and regulations specific to a site or proposal that could address concerns such as requiring dwellings to be clustered together or requiring screening to the road or neighbouring properties.
3. Supporting the LUB to pre-zone areas that are identified to be most suitable for multiple small dwelling units or other density increases. This analysis could be done using the suitable land analysis tool which combines data related to sensitive ecosystems, water recharge and other factors related to development impact into a single map. Cultural heritage interests and other data can also be integrated into this tool.

Staff are recommending that summer engagement focus on policy options that balance support for attainable and affordable housing with the preservation and protection of the natural environment. Examples of questions are as follows:

1. How do you feel about removing the ability for more lots to be created except for the donation of land for the purposes of affordable housing development and conservation? What concerns do you have?
2. How do you feel about the OCP supporting the ability to rezone to enable clusters of multiple small dwellings within a maximum floor area?
3. What do you think about using available data to identify suitable areas for increasing the number of housing units?

Staff are working on outreach material for Denman Island's housing project that addresses similar questions. This material includes visual comparisons of what is currently permitted and what cluster housing could look like. It also includes options for maximum combined floor area for different sizes of lots.

The work being done for Denman Island's housing project can be updated to address the Gabriola context. Staff will also work on putting together mapping to help facilitate discussion related to suitable areas. The webpage will also be updated to support this conversation and postcard with the URL can be printed and distributed to direct community members to the site.

A revision to the OCP Engagement Plan Summer 2025, reflecting the discussion above, is provided in the following table, blue highlight identifies changes and updates:

Table 1: OCP Engagement Plan Summer 2025 Update

Activity	Purpose/Process	Date
OCP engagement video (was webinar)	To orient community members to the next phase in engagement. Allow access to information on demand.	TBD
Engagement with SFN staff	IT staff will be working with SFN staff through each topic area related to the OCP.	June 26- September 2025
Share What We Heard Report	Share survey results and results from focus groups	
Share questions for community review online	Questions will be added to the webpage. A direct link to a comment page will be provided.	
Share OCP processes and related questions at markets and/or community events (TBD)	The purpose of the market outreach will be to engage the community in key questions related to the OCP review. The number of events will depend on staff availability.	
In person community meeting to review input June- Sept and focus on growth management questions	This will provide the opportunity to share outcomes of summer engagement and focus on in more detail on key questions related to housing options and growth management.	September 2025

Rationale for Recommendation

Focussing on key questions related to growth management and housing options through the summer will help to identify key concerns ahead of a draft OCP being presented.

ALTERNATIVES

1. The LTC may want to proceed with the previous approach to community engagement. Staff have the revised policy language to support this approach. However, it will not be presented in the same way in the integrated format.
2. The LTC can identify additional and/or alternative questions to ask the community.

NEXT STEPS

If the staff recommendation is approved staff will:

- Record a video presentation on the OCP process and engagement for the website
- The website will be updated to support proposed engagement approach
- Community engagement materials will be developed
- Staff will work on integrated format for the OCP
- Staff will schedule September workshop on housing options and growth management

Submitted By:	Narissa Chadwick RPP MCIP, Island Planner Stephen Baugh, Island Planner	June 17, 2025
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