

File No.: Gabriola OCP Project

DATE OF MEETING: March 28, 2025

TO: Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee

FROM: Narissa Chadwick, RPP MCIP, Island Planner  
Local Planning Services

COPY: Robert Kojima, Regional Planning Manager  
Stephen Baugh, Island Planner

SUBJECT: Gabriola Major Project OCP Review – Connectivity and Economy Discussion

## RECOMMENDATION

1. That the Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee request staff prepare draft policy language , as discussed at the March 28, 2025 LRC meeting, for broader public review for the connectivity and economy related content of the OCP.
2. That the Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee request staff to schedule a special meeting prior to the May LTC meeting to review policy language and the input of focus groups related to resource stewardship, freshwater and environment.

## REPORT SUMMARY

This report provides a review of policy options for the connectivity and economy content of the draft Gabriola OCP bylaw. It incorporates feedback from the Gabriola Visioning 2050 process and feedback from the focus groups that were held related to connectivity and economy content as well as survey results so far (there have been about 200 responses to the survey to date). The report also provides an update on outstanding focus groups and proposes next steps for the public engagement process.

## BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS

At the November 7, 2024 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 of diverse individuals. Invitations to focus groups were sent to people who had previously expressed interest in a particular topic and groups and individuals identified by Trustees. Focus groups are limited to 12 participants. In person attendance is encouraged. However, hybrid participation is available. To date focus group have been held for: housing, connectivity and economy. The LTC reviewed the draft policies and focus group feedback for housing on February 27, 2025.

### Connectivity Focus Group

The connectivity focus group was held on February 27 from 4pm- 6pm. The connectivity content relates to how people get around on the Island and connect to the outdoors, other amenities and each other. It includes transportation, parks and trails. There were 12 community members in attendance. Participants ranged in age and background contributing to a very engaging discussion. We were fortunate to have the Regional District of Nanaimo's

Senior Parks Planner Elaine McCulloch join us. This was a great opportunity identify how OCP policies can be written to support the implementation of the Parks and Trails Plan for Gabriola that the RDN is in the process of developing. Following the connectivity focus group session a summary of notes were circulated to the participants. The notes related to the connectivity focus group are included in Attachment 1.

The package of information provided to them is in Attachment 2. This included: a copy of the draft contents page, who does what document, changes table (identifying changes from existing OCP), draft goals and objectives and draft policies. Staff note that the draft policies will be presented differently in the draft OCP.

Proposed connectivity objectives are as follows:

1. To enable access to diverse range of land uses that provide for daily needs of Gabriola residents.
2. To maintain and increase the land available for parks and trails through planning processes and cooperation with government and community partners
3. To support a transportation network which reduces dependency on private automobile use and is in keeping with the rural character of Gabriola

Draft Policies

The table below identifies how the draft policies presented to the focus group differ from those in the existing OCP. A summary of related focus group input is included. The proposed policies/policy direction falls into two major categories:

Administrative Changes:

- These are changes that are administrative in nature (e.g. removal of policies that are not within the scope of the Islands Trust's authority).

Changes to Objectives and Policies:

- This was the focus of the focus group conversation in addition to other items that are discussed following the table.

**Table 1: Draft Policy Changes Proposed for Connectivity**

Change	Rationale
<b>Administrative/Technical Changes</b>	
Removed policies which are not within the scope of Islands Trust authority	Some of these existing policies could be included in an advocacy document. Additionally, some of these policies are simply repeating language from an existing agreement with the provincial Ministry responsible for roads (formerly MOTI).  <b>Focus Group Comments:</b> No discussion
Removed several objectives	Some objectives that were removed are better suited to an advocacy document; others were more appropriate to be included as policies.  <b>Focus Group Comments:</b> No discussion

Air Transportation objectives removed	<p>These objectives speak to specific issues of not supporting a land-based airport on Gabriola which is included as a policy.</p> <p><b>Focus Group Comments:</b> No discussion</p>
<b>Changes to Objectives and Policies</b>	
Added new objective to support on-island access to diverse land uses on Gabriola.	<p>This highlights the desire for services to be located on- island and for land to be available for institutional uses.</p> <p><b>Focus Group Comments:</b> Focus group participants agree with this concept. There was specific discussion related to access to recreational activities with an interest in supporting health and wellness being a key part of the Gabriola OCP's overall vision.</p>
Replaced existing objectives with one new objective for parks aiming to increase the land available for parks through planning processes and cooperation with others.	<p>This objective recognizes that parks planning for Gabriola relies on cooperation with others such as the RDN, and that park land is typically made available through land use processes such as subdivision.</p> <p><b>Focus Group Comments:</b> The focus group talked about parks and trails as essential to Gabriola. The RDN parks planner identified that there is a need for the OCP to include specific policies in order to support the implementation of the RDN's Recreation and Parks Master Plan for Gabriola which is currently being drafted. It was identified that the acquisition of land for parks should consider recreation interests such as soccer field. There was discussion about the potential of an amenity policy which would include recreation amenities as well as requirements for parkland dedication higher than what is required by the LGA.</p>
Added new objective to support a transportation network which includes active transportation, reduces dependency on automobile use and is in keeping with the rural character of Gabriola.	<p>Some existing objectives are repetitive, the revised objective reflects the existing objectives in a more concise way.</p> <p><b>Focus Group Comments:</b> Much of the discussion related to active transportation focussed on safety. There is a solid consensus that walking and biking along the roads on the island is not safe. Members of Gabriola's Transportation Society (GTS) identified some key considerations. Staff identified that while these the OCP is not the appropriate place to list action outside the Islands Trust jurisdiction, the OCP can refer to a plan that identifies GTS recommended actions. In addition, efforts can be made to connect the Society with the Ministry of Transportation.</p>
Revised the policy which determines the area of park land dedication where it is required at time of subdivision.	<p>The current policy is not specific and does not directly consider archaeological values or environmentally sensitive areas.</p> <p><b>Focus Group Comments:</b> Making a direct link to the RDN's parks and trails plan is critical. The RDN plans to engage with community groups such as GALLT to ensure that their interests are captured in the RDN's Recreation and Parks Master Plan .</p>

Added policy explicitly supporting implementation of RDN parks and trails plans.	<p>This recognizes the cooperative nature of parks and trails planning for Gabriola and links to the current work of the RDN to develop a <a href="#">Recreation and Parks Master Plan for Gabriola</a>.</p> <p><b>Focus Group Comments:</b> As indicated above, IT staff will be working directly with RDN staff to ensure OCP policy language helps facilitate the implementation of the RDN’s Recreation and Parks Master Plan.</p>
Added policy supporting a range of institutional uses to be permitted on institutional land	<p>This encourages clustering of institutional uses and joint use of spaces by various groups.</p> <p><b>Focus Group Comments:</b> No discussion</p>
Added policy recognizing some institutional land may be suitable for housing.	<p>This enables flexibility for institutional land to also include housing where appropriate.</p> <p><b>Focus Group Comments:</b> There is general support for more housing being closer to services and amenities</p>
Advocacy action identified to support Gabriola Village Vision Plan connectivity related actions	<p>While support for a number of the Gabriola Village Vision Plan exists in other ways, a more direct reference accompanied by an advocacy action is included here.</p> <p><b>Focus Group Comments:</b> No direct discussion. However, some of the Gabriola Transportation Society’s interests are in line with the Gabriola Village Vision Plan.</p>

#### Additional Comments:

- OCP needs to have strong language related to park and trail dedication.
- Safety should be paramount. In addition to transportation safety concerns, groundwater access for fire was also discussed.

#### Survey Feedback to date:

To date there have been ~200 survey responses. Community feedback related to reducing vehicle use highlights the need for better road maintenance, wider shoulders, and dedicated bike paths to improve safety for cyclists. Improved public transportation, including expanded GERTIE bus services and more frequent schedules, would reduce vehicle reliance. Increased commercial services, including grocery stores and small businesses in the south end, would support local self-sufficiency and minimize the need for travel. Almost 50% of respondents identify that separate paths for bikes and pedestrians would encourage them to reduce vehicle use.

In response to the question “Where do you go to connect with the Gabriola Island community” survey respondents identified that they connect through a variety of community hubs, including the Village core, the Commons, the Community Hall, Rollo Centre, and local businesses like Ground Up and Nesters. Events such as farmers’ markets, concerts, yoga classes, and book clubs, along with outdoor activities in parks, trails, and beaches, provide gathering opportunities. Facebook and The Sounder newspaper also play a role in fostering connections, while some residents express a desire for more inclusive or accessible engagement options.

#### Economy Focus Group

The economy focus group was held on March 11<sup>th</sup> from 4pm-6pm. There were 11 community members in attendance. As with the connectivity focus group, participants ranged in age and background. Participants

expressed appreciation for the business sector being included in the process citing that they feel they have been at a bit of a distance from the activities of the Islands Trust in the past. The group expressed a need for more outreach and education on the part of the Islands Trust as well as collaboration with data collection.

Economy focus group notes are included in Attachment 3. The information provided to the focus group in is in Attachment 4. This includes: a copy of the draft contents page, changes table (identifying changes from existing OCP), draft goals and objectives and draft policies. Staff note that the draft policies will be presented differently in the draft OCP.

Economy included the following over arching goal:

Foster a resilient, community-oriented economy that supports appropriately scaled commercial and light industrial development, enhances local employment, and encourages sustainable, small-scale economic activities while prioritizing compatibility with Gabriola Island’s natural environment and residential character, recognizing the Village Commercial area as the central hub of commerce with complementary small-scale secondary locations.

**Focus Group Comment:** Goals seems vague. It should identify things that can be measured. The “donut economics” approach was referenced.

Economy Objectives:

1. Support Home Occupations to promote community self-reliance and provide local employment opportunities, while ensuring these activities do not negatively affect the residential character or cause environmental harm.
2. Provide for commercial and light industrial development that is appropriately scaled to meet the needs of the Gabriola community, and ensure it is compatible with the natural environment.
3. Recognize the Village Commercial area as the hub of Commercial Activity on Gabriola, while supporting small scale secondary commercial locations.
4. Encourage sustainable, small-scale tourism activities that are compatible with the Island’s character.

**Table 1: Draft Policy Changes Proposed for Connectivity**

Change	Rationale
<b>Administrative/Technical Changes</b>	
Added policy to support the regulation of signage in the LUB.	This is currently an objective in the OCP with no policy to support it.  <b>Focus Group Comments:</b> No discussion
Reviewed commercial and industrial objectives, main change is to recognize the environment is considered in policies.	Some objectives have been removed where they are better expressed as policies or where their meaning could be combined with other objectives.  <b>Focus Group Comments:</b> No discussion on reformat. See below for discussion on specific topics.

Change	Rationale
<b>Administrative/Technical Changes</b>	
Combined District Commercial and Local Commercial sections into a single “Secondary Commercial” section.	Neither designation has objectives and the existing policies for these each of these areas allow for commercial uses outside of the Village Area.  <b>Focus Group Comments:</b> No discussion
Removed references to specific businesses and properties in the commercial and industrial policies.	Using business names to refer to a location causes confusion when business names change. Land use designations can be shown on a map to avoid uncertainty.  <b>Focus Group Comments:</b> No discussion
Removed tourist recreation section.	There are no properties within this land use designation. There are two policies, one is inconsistent with the land use designation map and the other simply refers to the Land Use Bylaw.  <b>Focus Group Comments:</b> No discussion
<b>Changes to Objectives and Policies</b>	
Added policy stating that Tourist Accommodation as a home occupation should only occur on the same lot as the operator’s principal residence.	This is consistent with the new provincial legislation which Gabriola has decided to be included in.  <b>Focus Group Comments:</b> Tourist accommodation as a home business should be in the home not in accessory buildings that could be used for long-term rental.

#### Comments on Specific Topics:

##### Lack of Affordable Housing is the Biggest Impediment to Business:

- This was identified in recent survey by the Gabriola Island Chamber of Commerce (GICC)
- The concept of land sharing with the ability to cluster a number of small houses was discussed
- Increasing housing in the village core was discussed as a means of contributing to vibrancy
- Housing options like townhouses are encouraged
- The OCP should support more housing in commercial areas not just one unit per commercial lot

##### Expansion of Commercial Space:

- It is difficult to find suitable space for a variety of commercial uses and services (eg. Gabriola Health Care Foundation, area for storage, commercial kitchen to “upscale” agricultural products (like jam)
- There was some discussion about the development of a community rainwater catchment system
- Looks at expanding commercial areas in more populated areas like Whalebone, the Seafood District (Clamshell, Oyster Way, etc.), Seymour/Ferne Rd, Islands View, El Verano, Silva Bay, church in Silva Bay?)

#### Improve Safe Access to Services:

- Don't divorce the active living/transportation/access conversation from the business community
- Need to improve pedestrian access to businesses
- Current OCP doesn't address mobility needs of an aging population

#### Light Industrial Zone:

- More space needed (see Island Enterprise Zone project)
- Policies need to be more flexible (eg. "the site is not located in, and will not cause industrial traffic to be routed along a local road through a Small Rural Residential designated area" is restrictive)
- Add limits on hours of work

#### Barriers Faced by Small Business Owners:

- Poor cell service
- Lack of heated storage space
- Islands Trust permitting fees

#### Relationship with Snuneymuxw

- GICC has just released a Reconciliation Action Plan and has been working with GAC to build relationships with SFN.
- GICC is working to nurture a relationship with Petroglyph Development Group.

#### Survey Feedback to date:

With the survey response so far only 30% believe there needs to be more commercial area on the Island. Written responses indicate support for expanding commercial areas in multiple locations on Gabriola Island, with the most frequently mentioned being the Village Core, Silva Bay, and the South End. Some participants suggest integrating small-scale commercial spaces within residential areas to promote walkability, while others advocate for careful planning to avoid unnecessary development. A minority express concerns that existing commercial spaces are sufficient and that additional development could negatively impact residential neighborhoods.

So far most survey respondents support allowing more than one residential unit above commercial properties, with many emphasizing conditions such as affordability, suitability of the lot, and infrastructure capacity (e.g., water and septic). Over 60% of survey respondents support commercial properties having more than one residential unit. A few respondents express concerns about potential impacts, preferring case-by-case evaluations based on property size, adjacency to residential areas, and self-sufficiency in water collection.

Regarding short term vacation rentals as home business survey responses reflect a mix of perspectives with many emphasizing the need for clear definitions, regulation, and balance between tourism and long-term housing availability. A common theme is support for allowing short-term rentals only in principal residences where owners are present, similar to traditional bed and breakfasts, while others advocate for stricter limits or outright prohibitions due to concerns about housing shortages and water use.

#### **Next Steps in the Public Engagement Process**

Addition focus groups as follows:

April 3 – Resource Stewardship Focus Group

April 17 – Water Focus Group

#### April 24 – Environment Focus Group

Staff has been working with the LTC to identify individuals to invite to each of these focus groups. The resource stewardship and water focus groups are additional to those that had been identified previously. Also, the environment focus group has been moved from the end of March to the end of April to accommodate the other two focus groups and provide staff with the time needed to prepare draft bylaws.

The LTC was scheduled to review the environment content at their April 17<sup>th</sup> LTC meeting. Given the additional focus groups and the later scheduling of the environment focus group staff are recommending the LTC direct staff to schedule a special meeting prior to their June LTC meeting to review resource stewardship, water and environment. At this meeting staff will also provide options for next steps in the OCP engagement process.

#### Rationale for Recommendation

The recommendations provided help support the momentum of the project.

#### ALTERNATIVES

**1. Request further information**

The LTC may request further information prior to requesting that staff draft the connectivity and economy content for the OCP. This may delay the project. Having a more complete set of draft policies will help to focus the discussion.

**2. Review the resource stewardship, water and environment content at the June 26<sup>th</sup> LTC meeting**

This will prohibit the ability for staff to have a full set of policies, reflecting LTC input, ready for review through summer community engagement.

#### NEXT STEPS

- Staff will engage the resource stewardship, water and environment focus groups through April
- Staff will schedule a meeting to review the resource stewardship, water and environment content and options for summer community engagement with the LTC prior to the June LTC meeting
- Staff will present draft policies for all content areas to the LTC for review at the June LTC meeting

Submitted By:	Narissa Chadwick, RPP MCIP	March 17, 2025
Concurrence:	Robert Kojima, Regional Planning Manager	March 18, 2025

#### ATTACHMENTS

1. Connectivity Focus Group Notes
2. Connectivity Focus Group Information
3. Economy Focus Group Notes
4. Economy Focus Group Information



## **Parks & Connectivity Focus Group Discussion Notes**

**Date:** February 27<sup>th</sup> 2025

### **Discussion Summary Themes**

#### **Safety**

- General > specific writing of policy:
  - Public safety should be paramount, with a high-level focus on ensuring safety for all (wheelchairs, walkers, strollers, etc.), ensuring that these mobility devices are not forced onto unsafe surfaces with cars.
  - Groundwater reserves should be discussed not only in the context of fire department needs but also in terms of parks and recreation relevance and care. Water access is also important for fields and active spaces.
  - The importance of health, activity, and motion should be emphasized, along with the concept that active kids become active adults.
  - Ensuring kids can safely access mobility infrastructure is key for their participation and safety in parks and recreation.
- Action: Darcy to send POSAC group language used.

#### **Park Land Dedication & Acquisitions**

- Developer CACs & in-lieu circumstances:
  - Other municipalities can dedicate more direction to developers, e.g., requesting developers to implement CACs.
  - LGA requires only 5% parkland dedication, but rezoning can advocate for more parkland and amenities for approval.
  - The type of parkland acquisition is important for flexibility.
  - The municipality works with RDN planners to take cash contributions or cash in lieu (for park that meets specifications).
  - Cost of GaLLT taking on additional costs beyond land given; stronger language is needed (e.g., buildable trails as part of the language).
  - Developers should build to community standards if desired.
  - Amenity-related zoning should be strong, making it clear what contributions are expected from developers.
- Q: Can developer amenity contribution work be done on a different parcel if it cannot be done on Parcel 'A'?

## **Programming**

- Are there issues being encountered with T&P (Trails & Parks)?
  - Safety for children around school areas, especially between recreation places.
  - Connectivity through Cox Park has opened avenues for easier connection.
  - Connectivity to 707 Park from the GRS society/school is still challenging, especially when bringing kids.
  - Example: Wilkinson Woods acquisition offers opportunities to borrow back from RDN.

## **Importance of Neighbourhood Connections**

- The GaLLT (Great Active Land Trails) network bridges gaps in active transportation (parks, trails, licenses).
- Mapping of bike paths and walking trails—can island residents map how to connect trails and bike paths?
- Authority for implementing community feedback on bike paths and walking trails.
- Can language be added to the OCP vision that speaks to broader park and trail creation?

## **Climate Change and Road Safety**

- The OCP should integrate language on decreasing car dependency to help mitigate climate change.
- A shift from car mobility to other forms of active transportation is essential. The OCP vision should reflect this.
- Reduced speed limits, better roadside lanes, and traffic calming measures are crucial.
- Specific language from MoTT (Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure) should be added to the OCP to specify safety measures for reducing speed, especially around schools and hills.
- Traffic circles and speed management measures, particularly on Church Street, are important to reduce accidents.
- The policy should emphasize the protection of natural vegetation along roads where possible, as vegetation too close to roads can be hazardous.
- Consider the whole island as a park, with transportation as a priority, and address high-traffic areas like Durkson Street.

## **Inter-Governmental Advocacy**

- RDN refers to the OCP to carry out direction, e.g., cash in lieu (CACs) come from the OCP.
- Parkland acquisition is influenced by OCP language, such as whether the OCP says to take park land or cash in lieu.
- Advocacy for speed limit reductions in neighborhoods with tertiary roads.
- Could Neighborhood lobbying to fund improvements be worked into policies? e.g., paving roads in alignment with MoTT regulations
- MoTT guidelines for active transportation and road upgrades should be followed for improvement.

## **RDN Masterplan**

- Linkage between Trails and parks work collaborative done with community orgs and Island Trust work should align with the and the RDN Masterplan.
- Engagement for the RDN Masterplan (May 2025), offering opportunities for community participation.
- More detailed trails network plan to connect current active plans.

## **Active Parks**

- There is a need for more active parks and reliable places to play.
- Ensure the OCP supports the provision of outdoor field facilities.
  - Example: Huxley Park parking lot was blocked due to OCP restrictions.
- Skatepark easements should be allowed for active park uses.
- Flexibility in language supporting active recreation park uses is critical.

## **Population by Age Demographic**

- Addressing how to bring and keep kids on the island is important—many leave due to lack of space for youth.
- Planning should focus on supporting a diverse age range.
- A significant percentage (35-40%) of kids play soccer, but there are challenges in maintaining soccer field.

## **Opportunities for Green/Open Space Language Education**

- Parks designated for active use should be clearly differentiated from parks for preservation.
- A ‘central park’ is needed, with spaces for gyms, pickleball, and indoor activities.
- Education should be integrated into the landscape, such as educational boards and history (e.g., First Nations site history).
- There should be a hub for nature education, potentially larger than Huxley Park.
- Informed kids lead to informed adults—education is key.
- Donation of space for recreation needs to be clearly identified in policies ensuring it aligns to reflect what community actually wants

## **Policy Language Clarifications & Considerations**

- The language around multi-dwelling developments and transportation connections is too broad; it needs to be more specific, clarifying how transportation connections should work.
- For rezoning applications (e.g., from institution to housing), there should be better focus on facilitating walking access to and around essential services.
- Support for development above the firehall should be allowed.
- Policies should be specific and measurable, particularly concerning what safety means. I.e.
- Walkability and trail access to the beaches need improvement, with wider shoulders, crosswalks, and pedestrian-oriented roads. Language should explicitly name, rather than broad language such as just “widening-roads”.
- Advocacy related policies should have stronger language (especially in relation to the roles of developers, and community amenity contributions (CACs))

## **Meeting Conclusion & Next Steps**

- A survey will be sent out to gather further community input which can be circulated to community members as well.
- Summer engagement activities are planned to ensure continued involvement and feedback from the community.
- Future reflections will be organized to assess progress and refine strategies based on ongoing input and evolving needs.

*\*Reflections and feedback from Gabriola Transportation Society :*

1. Expressed strong support on completion of the Village Trail to the ferry.
2. Promote the idea of secondary roads with a single lane down the middle and with 2.5 metre paved shoulders on either side. Potential pilot locations:
  - Malaspina Dr.
  - Berry Pt. Rd. (from Norwich to Berry Pt.)
  - Whalebone (from bottom of hill)
  - Gray, Murray & Rowan Rds.
  - Dirksen and Stephens (from South Rd. to Pat Burns (excluding hills with low visibility around turns))
3. Reduce speed limits to 40 km/h and 30 km/h on secondary roads, especially in popular walking areas and tourist destinations.
4. Ensure Gabriola cycle paths are included in the OCP.
5. Ensure McConvey Road and the tunnel remain designated as heritage roads.
6. Support the concept of multi-family housing projects in the Village area and along bus routes.

## **Attachment 1: 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

# CONNECTIVITY - Who Does What for Parks in Electoral Area B?

The provision of parks, trails and water access in Electoral Area B of the Nanaimo Regional District (which includes Gabriola Island) is complex and relies on all levels of government and other entities to manage and provide a parks system.

## **Provincial Government:**

- **BC Parks** operates four provincial parks within Electoral Area B, including a day-use area and a campground on DeCourcy Island.
- The Provincial Government manages other Crown lands in the area, which feature both formally and informally developed trails, as well as undeveloped road rights-of-way that have become popular access points to water and shorelines.

## **Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN):**

- The RDN oversees two regional parks and numerous community parks throughout the service area. They engage in parks planning and management, often involving local residents through open houses, surveys, and committees.

## **Snuneymuxw First Nation (SFN):**

- The relationship of the SFN to the parks system and the protection of lands and waters is of crucial importance. The RDN, the Provincial and Federal Government, and the Islands Trust are committed to collaborating with the SFN to ensure their values are prioritized in parks planning and operations.

## **Federal Government:**

- The Federal Government manages Crown lands on Gabriola Island, which include several popular unsanctioned trails providing important cross-island connections.
- The Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) regulates foreshore development to protect fish habitats, ensuring that recreational access structures like stairs and docks do not harm the ecosystem.

## **Gabriola Island Local Trust:**

- The Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee plays a significant role in parkland provision, land use, and conservation across Electoral Area B. Its relationship with the RDN is guided by a Letter of Understanding, last reviewed and signed in 2013.

## **Local Community Groups:**

- Organizations such as the Gabriola Land and Trails Trust (GaLTT) are vital to the parks and trails system within Electoral Area B. They engage in fundraising for local parks and trail amenities, advocate for conservation and responsible use, and enhance parks and trails through programming and facilitating individual use.

# CONNECTIVITY - Draft Connectivity Objectives and Policies

## 1. To enable access to diverse range of land uses that provide for daily needs of Gabriola residents.

### General Connectivity

- Commercial, multi-dwelling developments and public facilities should provide structures for the convenient and secure parking and locking of bicycles.
- Multi-dwelling developments should have a pedestrian connection to a bus route or commercial area.
- Rezoning for commercial uses may be considered where it connects to or establishes an active transport route to the commercial use from residential lands which are currently isolated from commercial areas.
- Work with the Province, Regional District of Nanaimo and local not for profit organizations to realize pedestrian planning and improvements and intersection improvements encouraged by the Gabriola Village Vision Plan.

### Institutional

- Institutional zoning should allow a range of institutional uses to allow joint use and clustering of institutional uses.
- Applications for rezoning of Institutional land to include housing may be considered.

## 2. To maintain and grow the land available for parks through planning processes and through cooperation with government and community partners.

### Parks

- Parks, and trails shall be permitted in all land use designations.
- Support the RDN Parks and Trails Master Plan for Area B.
- Recognize dark sky spaces as recreational amenities for community members and visitors.
- Greenspace and parks are encouraged to support the connectivity of greenspace and parks on Gabriola Island through greenways to avoid habitat 'islands.'



- There shall be no minimum parcel size for parks.
- Trails may be acquired at the time of subdivision or as a condition of rezoning. Dedicated trails shall be registered by means of a right of way plan, easement or other means and registered on title of the lands affected in the Land Titles Office.
- Public boat launch facilities may be permitted within community parks and at public road endings providing waterfront access subject to adequate parking being provided and consideration of First Nations interests.
- Existing road endings providing access to the waterfront shall be retained open for public and emergency vehicle access to the foreshore. Subject to securing a permit from the Provincial Ministry the development of stairs or trails to improve the means of access, the provision of limited parking and identification signage shall be encouraged.
- Where public access to the foreshore is required at the time of subdivision, sites providing ease of access to the waterfront shall be prioritized for public access. Consolidation of road dedications may be considered where it would create a more useable means of public access or is contiguous to an existing or proposed public park dedication.
- Where park land dedication is required at time of subdivision, the location should be a single contiguous parcel and meet one or more of the following criteria:
  - provides direct access to the marine shoreline;
  - is identified for park, trail, or conservation area by this OCP or an RDN parks and trails plan;
  - connects parks and natural areas, contributing to an interconnected greenways network;
  - contains areas for the protection of environmentally sensitive areas to be retained in a natural, undisturbed state. The protection of environmentally sensitive areas should be in addition to the minimum parkland dedication requirements pursuant to the Local Government Act;
  - contains a known archaeological site or sites, or has been identified by a First Nation as an area with archaeological significance to be protected. The protection of archaeological sites and areas should be in addition to the minimum parkland dedication requirements pursuant to the Local Government Act.

Where none of the above criteria can be met, the owner of the land shall provide cash in lieu of dedicating park land, which shall be in reserve to acquire park land only within the area of application of this bylaw.

**3. To support a transportation network which reduces dependency on private automobile use and is in keeping with the rural character of Gabriola;**

**Transportation**

- Terminals and land-based airports, other than an emergency helicopter landing area, shall not be permitted in the Plan area.

**Roads**

- New roads, and modifications to existing roads, should not fragment agricultural land or environmentally sensitive areas.
- Where possible, the natural vegetation along side the travelled portion of a public road shall be retained.
- The development of a bridge, or other form of fixed transportation link, connecting Gabriola Island to any other island or the mainland is not supported.

**Active Transportation**

- Provisions shall be made for bicycle parking, bicycle paths, and pedestrian paths in new developments.
- The creation of off-road bicycle and pedestrian trails along roadways and across properties where there are opportunities to connect to existing trails, or roads should be considered through bylaw amendment and subdivision applications or when road resurfacing or other development occurs that could facilitate improved facilities for active transportation.
- Proximity and accessibility to a bus route should be referred to when considering land use and planning decisions.

**Marine Transportation**

- Passenger commuter-type service (e.g. water taxi) shall be permitted based on appropriate upland and water zoning and provided the operator provides adequate parking and pedestrian facilities and minimizes noise disturbance. Depending on location and the nature of the use a development permit may be required.
- A dock or wharf that provides a water connection from Gabriola Island to Mudge Island shall be supported, outside of environmentally sensitive areas and areas of cultural heritage significant and subject to there being sufficient parking to eliminate and avoid parking congestion on Gabriola Island caused by the dock or wharf.

- A major ferry terminal on Gabriola to provide service to a mainland destination is not supported.
- Public trailer boat launch ramps, canoe/kayak hand launch beach sites, and dinghy docks are supported, subject to adequate parking.
- Maintenance of the ferry terminal site on Gabriola Island is supported.
- Marine Bays which are sheltered and have conditions suitable for anchorage should not permit other structures or uses which would impede the ability for boats to anchor temporarily.

## CONNECTIVITY - Where Draft Policies Differ from Existing OCP

The proposed changes to Official Community Plan (OCP) policy related to connectivity are described in the table below. Specific topics that fit within connectivity are related to Transportation, Parks, and Institutional lands. A summary of what the current OCP contains and some of the related issues can be found in the [Connectivity Discussion Guide](#) (online and attached).

Change	Rationale
New Connectivity Section comprising of Transportation, Parks, and Institutional Policies	This section aligns with the revised approach to the OCP which better aligns with the Trust Policy Statement.
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.
Removed policies which are not within the scope of Islands Trust authority	Some of these existing policies could be included in an advocacy document. Additionally, some of these policies are simply repeating language from an existing agreement with the provincial Ministry responsible for roads (formerly MOTI).
Added new objective to support on-island access to diverse land uses on Gabriola.	This highlights the desire for services to be located on-island and for land to be available for institutional uses.
Replaced existing objectives with one new objective for parks aiming to increase the land available for parks through planning processes and cooperation with others.	This objective recognizes that parks planning for Gabriola relies on cooperation with others such as the RDN, and that park land is typically made available through land use processes such as subdivision.
Added new objective to support a transportation network which includes active transportation, reduces dependency on automobile use and is in keeping with the rural character of Gabriola	Some existing objectives are repetitive, the revised objective reflects the existing objectives in a more concise way.
Removed several objectives	Some objectives that were removed are better suited to an advocacy document; others were more appropriate to be included as policies.
Air Transportation objectives removed	These objectives speak to specific issues of not supporting a land-based airport on Gabriola which is included as a policy.
Revised the policy which determines the area of park land dedication where it is required at time of subdivision.	The current policy is not specific and does not directly consider archaeological values or environmentally sensitive areas.
Added policy explicitly supporting implementation of RDN parks and trails plans.	This recognizes the cooperative nature of parks and trails planning for Gabriola and links to the current work of the RDN to develop a <a href="#">Recreation and Parks Master Plan for Gabriola</a> .
Added policy supporting a range of institutional uses to be permitted on institutional land	This encourages clustering of institutional uses and joint use of spaces by various groups.
Added policy recognizing some institutional land may be suitable for housing.	This enables flexibility for institutional land to also include housing where appropriate.
Advocacy action identified to support Gabriola Village Vision Plan connectivity related actions	While support for a number of the Gabriola Village Vision Plan exists in other ways, a more direct reference accompanied by an advocacy action is included here.

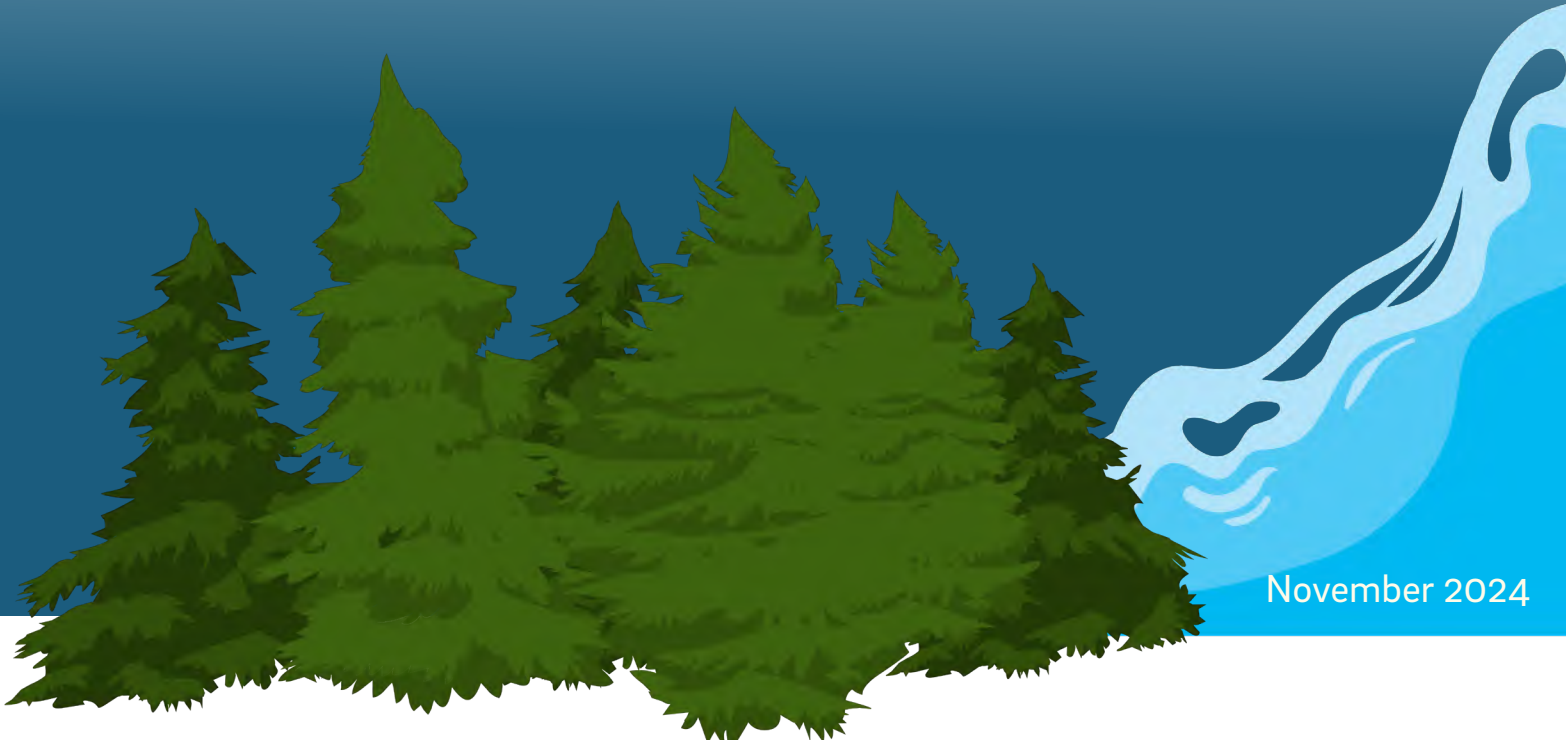


Islands Trust

# GABRIOLA OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN REVIEW

## Discussion Guides

# CONNECTIVITY



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 connectivity.

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.

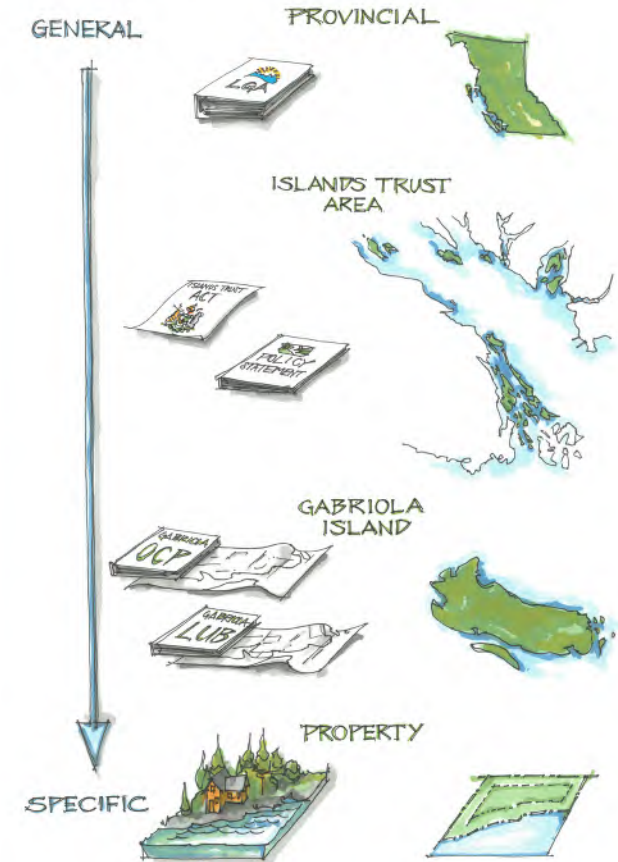
**The OCP must align with higher level policies.**

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 Connectivity?

The current Gabriola OCP places limitations on transportation and infrastructure to maintain the island’s rural character and environmental integrity. It prohibits land-based airports, supports water taxi services with proper facilities, and opposes a major ferry terminal. Road developments should respect the natural landscape and prioritize scenic routes, while minimizing impacts on agricultural and sensitive land.

Parks policies note the importance of community parks, trail networks, and public access to waterfront areas. The importance of parkland dedication through subdivision applications is noted and collaboration between the Local Trust Committee and the Regional District of Nanaimo is also expressed as a key aspect of the development and planning for parks and outdoor recreational space on Gabriola.

# Exploring Connectivity

The approach to transportation in the OCP is one of caution. It supports the existing state of transportation and opposes major ferry terminals and land-based airports. One exception to this is the support for new bike lanes in new developments and along the roads within the bicycle route plan. Improved connection to Mudge Island is also supported, but only if it doesn’t disturb sensitive areas and parking issues are resolved. Roads are encouraged to respect the natural landscape, retain natural vegetation on the shoulders, and their locations should not fragment agricultural land or environmentally sensitive areas.

With regards to parks and recreation, the plan reflects an interest in increased parks, trails and access to the waterfront. It is also important to recognize that while OCP policies can play a role, coordination with the Regional District of Nanaimo is necessary for effective parks and recreation planning.

# What we heard

The engagement process revealed that Gabriola takes pride in their expansive network of trails and parks and is keen to build it up further. Many community members expressed interests in improving roads to make biking and walking safer. These are things that would contribute to the goal of 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/>

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

**We want to hear from you!**

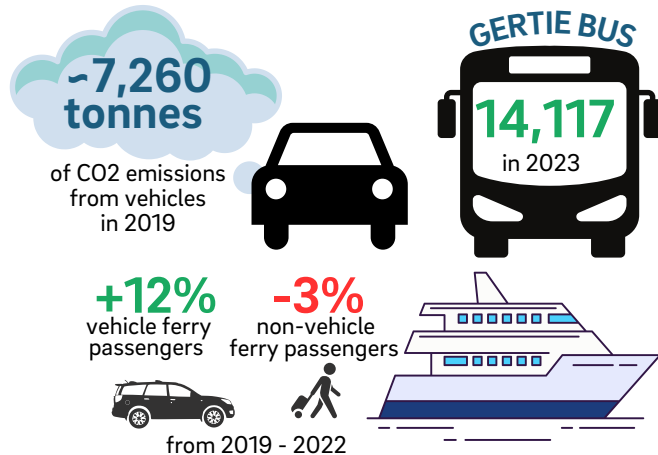
The survey is open to all Gabriola residents! Answer the survey to tell us what you think about connectivity, or any of the other topics that Gabriola residents told us is important during the last round of engagement. Complete the survey online, or contact Islands Trust to complete a paper version of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



# GABRIOLA ISLAND community snapshot CONNECTIVITY



## Ridership



## Short Commutes

1km (approximately 15-20 minutes) of car-free travel is most accessible for:

**17%**  
of residential lots within 1km of the Village Core

**8.8%**  
of residential lots within 1km of Descanso Bay (the ferry terminal)

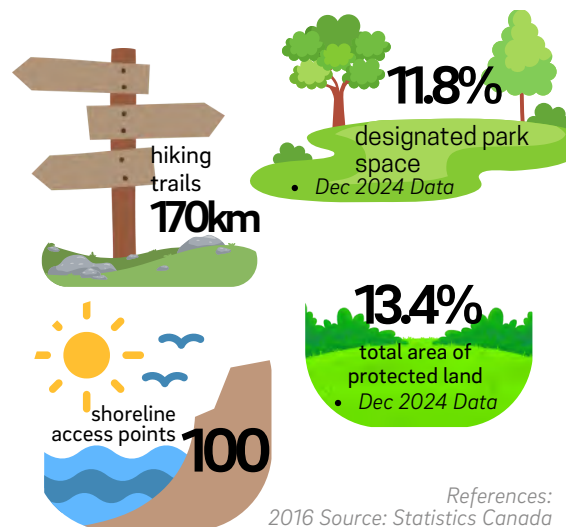


### Did you know...

that the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MOTI) is responsible for roads on Island, the Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) has contributed to pedestrian and cycling infrastructure



## Park & Open Spaces



## Walkability

**Score: Low**

A walkability score assesses the ease of access to essential amenities (e.g., grocery stores) less than 30 minutes from home and safety factors, such as sidewalks and public transit, without relying on a personal vehicle. A low score indicates a highly car-dependent location. On Gabriola, this is most applicable from primary locations such as:

- BC Ferries Terminal
- Village Core



*References:*  
2016 Source: Statistics Canada  
2021 Source: Statistics Canada  
Islands Trust Conservancy  
2024 Gabriola Health & Wellness Report  
2024 GERTIE data

Learn more about next steps in the OCP review process



Participate in the topic-focused survey





## Local Economy Focus Group Discussion Notes

Date: March 11<sup>th</sup> 2025

### Discussion Summary Themes

#### Strengths of the Gabriola Economy

- recognized as the Isle of The Arts.
- collaboration that happens on this island-crazy, wild and supportive partnerships.
- all the small businesses starting up, especially those run by young people. It's the housing that's the challenge.
- thoughtful shoppers. People want to know what they're getting and where it's from. Is it Canadian? What are the ingredients?
- diversity of types of business—over 600 business for a population of 4,500!
- amazing tourism assets that are shared in a sustainable way (beaches, trails, etc.). Doing tourism in a responsible way.
- loyal customers, especially during the slow season; helping us keep our doors open.
- intentionality—our commercial spaces are where we can make connections, exchange ideas, share education, and raise awareness.

#### Commercial Space

- Review [2017 Gabriola Island Commercial Demand Forecast report](#). Showed there was little need for further commercial development.
- Gabriola Health Care Foundation (GHCF) is looking at expanding, ideally in the village core, but it's very difficult to find suitable space.
- Building behind the Co-op, which has a residence upstairs, is empty and the owners are non-responsive.
- Space that was formerly The Kitchen restaurant is too large for most small businesses.

#### Rainwater Catchment

- Delighted that commercial properties can now use rainwater. This took 12 years.
- GHCF is moving in to using rainwater at the clinic.
- There is so much water in the parking lot at the village. Can we find a way to capture it and use it?

#### Climate Change

- The overarching goal needs to be more specific and to reference what framework will be used to define and measure 'sustainability.'
  - E.g. Kate Raworth's Doughnut Economics framework.
  - What are we measuring? Are businesses measuring greenhouse gas emissions? If so, are we looking at scope 1, 2 or 3? Are we looking at where our local products come from? Are we looking at water and waste?



- Include provisions to encourage community rainwater collection projects. Building larger water infrastructure projects. E.g. large pond up in the 707, underground storage.
- Policies that encourage energy projects as well. E.g. neighbourhood geothermal, human manure bio farms. Mention these in the OCP to get people thinking about these things.

## Housing in the Village Core

- Would like to see an enhancement in the number of people who live in the village.
- Gabriola village is a very ‘unvillage’ like village. It’s a strip mall that lacks vibrancy once the sun does down. Current OCP wording continues this. The limit of 2 residential dwellings per commercial property is very low.
- Lack of critical mass of housing around the village also leads to more driving.
- Vienna model is the premier model—village core with green commons and housing above commercial spaces. Parking is in the back.
  - It’s easier to deal with waste and water when it’s concentrated.
- Pattison Group owns the vacant property behind Folklife village. They could develop this and expand commercial spaces with residences above, not to mention the roof space for catching rainwater but, apparently, they have no interest in developing it.

*“Our issue is always **DENSITY**. Can we have townhouses? Small business with rental units above them, etc.?”*

*“This used to be a place where young couples could come and buy a home.*

*“We need to address density to meet the needs of our community. If our community is dwindling because of the lack of density, then, we need to preserve and protect density. We need to talk about **concentrated density**. Focus on it as a means to create a functional village core. It’s a more nuanced density discussion—judicious placement of additional densities.”*

\*Correct error under Tourism section D to “Tourist accommodation may be considered as a home occupation use only where it occurs **in the principal residence**.”

## Neighbourhood Planning

- Look at creating service areas in more densely populated areas like Whalebone, the Seafood District (Clamshell, Oyster Way, etc.), Seymour/Ferne Rd, Islands View, El Verano, and Silva Bay (50,000 visitors coming to that end of island by boat or plane).
  - E.g., conversion of a residential home into a health service provider space; an artist co-op; neighbourhood café/convenience store.
  - E.g. people already walk to Slow Rise Bakery and pick up fresh bread.
  - Could there be some sort of commercial space integrated into Christ Church at Silva Bay?

## Safety & Accessibility

- Healthcare Foundation is expanding their scope from health to well-being. The current OCP recommendations don't fully reflect our population and their mobility needs. Accessibility and safety need to be addressed.
- Accessibility to the island's tourism assets (beaches, trails, etc.) is a barrier.
- Could stipulate universal access/pedestrian access to commercial spaces.
- Universal design is great, but it can also be very costly for developers. Don't use language that prohibits business owners from being able to participate.
- We need more clearly defined areas for active living. Don't divorce the active living/transportation/access conversation from the business community. They can absolutely participate.
- Promote creation of bike paths to address safety and access concerns. Old Centre Rd trail would be an ideal active transportation route—get cyclists off of the road, let dog walkers, etc. know to expect them. More people would cycle if it was safer.

## Worker Housing

- #1 issue that businesses on island identified is labour shortage due to housing for staff in a recent GICC survey.
- No discussion of staff housing in the OCP. Add this to allowing more than one dwelling.

*"I've had to look for housing multiple times since moving back here. I'm told constantly, 'Just get a trailer.' This is not a solution for me, as a young person who wants to live here autonomously. We need to think bigger again."*

## De-Regulate Co-Housing Options

- Co-housing is difficult due to the zoning restrictions. Trying to have different types of buildings on a property. Younger people wanting to go in on a property together but wanting to have separate dwellings, but it's a grey area. Look at loosening some of these restrictions for this particular situation.
- Synergy that happens in intergenerational communities. Could be used to address housing issues and economic needs.
- If more people were doing this, we would have a lot more rentals.
- Look at shrinking the parcel size needed to develop a secondary dwelling. Could it be 3 acres instead of 5? Would need to look at the size of the parcels that exist.
- Combine co-housing with opportunities for agriculture. People open to a co-housing situation are likely to be open to leasing land to farmers for food production.
  - Note that leasing farmland is not a huge financial benefit—you can only charge ~\$5/acre
  - Due to federal law, land that has a residential mortgage on it cannot be used for farming.
- We have people who can afford market rent, but there's nothing for them to rent.

## Barriers faced by Small Business Owners

- Poor cell phone reception
  - Trades people needing to drive off site to find cell reception.
  - Self-employed people needing reliable service (they come to Ground Up to use the WIFI).
  - Also important for emergency planning.
  - We can't adequately protect the environment without being able to communicate.
  - Most recently, Telus and Industry Canada explored 3 locations on Gabriola to place a cell tower. They decided to pause the process following complaints from the public.
- Lack of heated storage space—big issue for artists.
- Islands Trust application fees can be a barrier
  - If applications are deemed to have a “community benefit,” applicant can apply for fee sponsorship through the Islands Trust Executive Committee.

## Agricultural Activities & Access

- There is empty agricultural land on the island and local farmers who have demand increases and want to increase the island's production of food, but those who own the land want to maintain their privacy. We need further incentives (beyond farm tax status) to encourage land owners to open up this land.
- There's an interest in looking at agricultural activities in the foreshore—growing seaweed for fertilizer. Could be a great partnership with Petroglyph Development.
- Key issues for farmers are access to farm land and a shortage of labour.
  - Looking at incentives for youth who live here to get in to farming.
- Incentivizing local vendors to upscale their products. The issue is the lack of commercial kitchen space for processing. We need manufacturing facilities where people can do value-added processing. Commons Kitchen is not suitable for most.  
E.g. fermented products have to be stored in a commercial space, yet the Commons Kitchen doesn't have storage space.

## Light Industrial Zone

- Look at the [Island Enterprise Zone](#) project that the Gabriola Chamber of Commerce (GICC) worked on. Add [Julie's Enterprise Zone report](#).
  - Proposed a shared space for several light industrial businesses
    - E.g. composting facility, a brewery.
    - E.g. glass recycling that GIRO doesn't want to do anymore and end product could be used as fill. Trying to encourage businesses that do light manufacturing at a slightly larger scale. 5-20 employees and manufacture here on island without needing to bring imports from off-island.
- The following needs to be changed or it will prohibit a significant number of existing businesses: “the site is not located in, and will not cause industrial traffic to be routed along a local road through a Small Rural Residential designated area.”

- Add limits on hours of work for loud exterior work.

### **Promote Sustainable Businesses**

- What would a sustainable logging program on Gabriola look like? (Reference Merv Wilkinson's work).
- How do we support sustainable tourism in accessing parks?
  - horseback riding tours, mountain biking, nature school have all requested permission from RDN and were denied. People do all of those activities in the 707 already. Guidelines are needed. Could this be a good fit for a partnership with SFN on their lands?
- Gabriola is ideal for cycle tourism. We can improve the infrastructure--more bike racks, improved safety.

### **Relationship with Snuneymuxw**

- GICC has just released a Reconciliation Action Plan and has been working with GAC to build relationships with SFN.
- GICC is working to nurture a relationship with Petroglyph Development Group.

### **Challenges with Implementation**

- Beyond the funding GICC gets through the RDN to support community economic development, we don't have taxation support to do any of this. We can create the policies to allow things to happen, but implementing them is the challenge.

### **Beautification Initiatives**

- Try to encourage clean up of "rotting wealth" (rotting boats, trailers, etc.) in people's yards.
- Action: GICC could host a "swap day" and look at partnering with GVFD around their FireSmart initiative.

### **Community Engagement with the Islands Trust**

- People don't know how to navigate the Islands Trust.
- Average people experience barriers to engaging with the Trust due to the bureaucratic nature of having to attend their business meetings in the middle of the day.
- More outreach and education are needed.
- Collaboration on data collection

## **Attachment 1: 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

## **Where Economy Section Differs From Existing OCP**

The proposed changes to Official Community Plan (OCP) policy related to economy are described in the table below. Specific topics that fit within economy are related to the commercial and industrial lands. This includes topics of home occupations, tourism, the village area, and commercial and industrial uses. A summary of what the current OCP contains and some of the related issues can be found in the [Economy Discussion Guide](#) online and in Attachment 5.

<b>Change</b>	<b>Rationale</b>
Added policy to support the regulation of signage in the LUB.	This is currently an objective in the OCP with no policy to support it.
Added policy to ensure bylaw amendment applications for commercial or industrial uses provide supporting information related to freshwater supply, sewage capacity and environmental impacts.	This is in line with feedback from the visioning process and the realities of developing on Gabriola.
Reviewed commercial and industrial objectives, main change is to recognize the environment is considered in policies.	Some objectives have been removed where they are better expressed as policies or where their meaning could be combined with other objectives.
Replaced requirement to ensure form and character of development is consistent with the Folklife Village to specific wording from the DPA 7 objectives.	Clarifies what the actual objective of the policy is and creates consistency with existing language related to the development permit area.
Combined District Commercial and Local Commercial sections into a single "Secondary Commercial" section.	Neither designation has objectives and the existing policies for these each of these areas allow for commercial uses outside of the Village Area.
Removed references to specific businesses and properties in the commercial and industrial policies.	Using business names to refer to a location causes confusion when business names change. Land use designations can be shown on a map to avoid uncertainty.
Removed tourist recreation section.	There are no properties within this land use designation. There are two policies, one is inconsistent with the land use designation map and the other simply refers to the Land Use Bylaw.
Added policy stating that Tourist Accommodation as a home occupation should only occur on the same lot as the operator's principal residence.	This is consistent with the new provincial legislation which Gabriola has decided to be included in.

## **ECONOMY – Commercial, Industrial and Tourism**

### **Over arching goal**

Foster a resilient, community-oriented economy that supports appropriately scaled commercial and light industrial development, enhances local employment, and encourages sustainable, small-scale economic activities while prioritizing compatibility with Gabriola Island’s natural environment and residential character, recognizing the Village Commercial area as the central hub of commerce with complementary small-scale secondary locations.

### **Objectives:**

1. Support Home Occupations to promote community self-reliance and provide local employment opportunities, while ensuring these activities do not negatively affect the residential character or cause environmental harm.
2. Provide for commercial and light industrial development that is appropriately scaled to meet the needs of the Gabriola community, and ensure it is compatible with the natural environment.
3. Recognize the Village Commercial area as the hub of Commercial Activity on Gabriola, while supporting small scale secondary commercial locations.
4. Encourage sustainable, small-scale tourism activities that are compatible with the Island’s character.

### **Home Based Business**

**Support Home Occupations to promote community self-reliance and provide local employment opportunities, while ensuring these activities do not negatively affect the residential character or cause environmental harm.**

### **Home Occupation Policies**

- a) A home occupational use may be permitted as an accessory use in all land use designations where a residential use is permitted.
- b) The zoning bylaw shall specify general conditions of use for home occupations, such as:
  - i. Specifying the range of uses permitted as a home occupation;

- ii. Restricting the floor area used by a home occupation;
  - iii. Requiring the use to be conducted by a resident of the parcel
  - iv. specifying a limit on the number of non-resident persons who may be employed, based on the size of the parcel;
  - v. Prohibiting or limiting the exterior storage of material or equipment;
  - vi. Requiring screening;
  - vii. Requiring adequate off-street parking.
- c) Home occupations that require large amounts of groundwater, are incompatible with the surrounding neighbourhood, or which result in negative impacts to the natural environment should not be permitted.

### **Commercial and Industrial Land**

**Provide for commercial and light industrial development that is appropriately scaled to meet the needs of the Gabriola community, and ensure it is compatible with the natural environment.**

#### **General Commercial and Industrial Policies**

- a. A commercial or industrial designated site shall be designated as a development permit area where it is believed important to regulate the form and character of development which occurs there.
- b. One single-dwelling residential unit per parcel may be permitted in any Commercial or Industrial designation.
- c. Up to half of the total floor area of a building on commercial land may be permitted to support residential use.
- d. The number and size of signs permitted shall be regulated in the Land Use Bylaw.
- e. Rezoning and OCP amendment applications to allow for commercial or industrial uses must provide evidence of adequate freshwater supply, sewage disposal capacity, and understanding of environmental impacts, with mitigation strategies to reduce harm.



## **The Village Core**

**Recognize the Village Commercial area as the hub of Commercial Activity on Gabriola, while supporting small scale secondary commercial locations.**

a) The Village Commercial designation shall provide for a range of commercial uses including: retail, restaurant, personal service use, office use, institutional use, building supply sales and the servicing and fuelling of motor vehicles.

c) The expansion of the Village Commercial designation shall be considered based on compliance with the following criteria:

- i. there is adequate off-street parking, landscaping and pedestrian access;
- ii. the design and site layout of the proposed development can be well integrated into the existing land use pattern in the Village Centre;
- iii. the parcel fronts onto a main road and access and egress to the parcel can be provided safely;
- iv. the additional area proposed for Village Commercial is small in size.

d) Land in the Village Commercial designation and any future additions to the Village Commercial designation shall be placed in the Village Centre development permit area so as to ensure that the form and character of development:

- i. Contains small scale building design;
- ii. Includes pedestrian oriented development with amenities such as public open spaces and walkways;
- iii. Prioritizes water conservation; and
- iv. Supports a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

## **Commercial Areas Outside the Village Core – District Commercial**

- Commercial land located outside of the Village Commercial area shall provide for a variety of commercial uses dependent on the location, and needs of the residents in the immediate area.
- An application to designate a site for commercial use outside of the Village Commercial area shall be considered based on individual merit and satisfactory compliance with the following criteria:

- i. the proposed use is small-scale in nature and primarily provides a local convenience service for a neighbourhood;
- ii. the parcel has adequate off-street parking; and
- iii. the proposed local commercial use will not detract from the residential character of the surrounding area or cause excessive traffic to be routed along a local road.

## **Tourism**

### **Encourage sustainable, small-scale economic activities that are compatible with the Island's character.**

- a) Provision shall be made for a Tourist Commercial designation. Uses permitted in this designation should include but not be limited to: marina, restaurant, licensed lounge, tourist accommodation, tackle shop and marine outfitters shop, laundromat, campground, and retail and office use accessory to one of the above listed uses.
- b) Applications for approval to expand the Tourist Commercial area shall be evaluated based on individual merit, where all of the following criteria can be met:
  - i. public access to the foreshore or an adjacent public recreation site is not reduced;
  - ii. the proposed development is small in scale and is to be developed in a manner which reflects and is sensitive to the character of surrounding properties;
  - iii. existing trails and important natural features on the parcels are retained and public use of the trails is maintained; and
  - iv. adequate off-street parking can be provided to accommodate the development.

## **Tourist Accommodation**

- c) In no case shall the maximum density for a tourist accommodation use exceed 13 tourist accommodation units per hectare or a maximum 30 tourist accommodation units in the development.
- d) Tourist accommodation may be considered as a home occupation use only where it occurs on the same parcel as the home occupation operator's principal residence.

e) Tourist accommodation businesses that do not occur within the principal residence of the home occupation operator should be regulated through the temporary use permit process.

e) The Plan does not support timeshare developments.

## **Camping**

f) The zoning bylaw shall make provision for a Campground zone subject to the provision of adequate water and sewage treatment.

g) The Descanso Bay Regional Park campground is designated as Tourist Recreational.

h) Permitted uses and conditions of use within the Campground zone shall be specified in the Zoning Bylaw

## **Industrial Land**

a) No provision shall be made for any heavy industrial use in the planning area.

b) Future applications to designate a site for light industrial use shall be evaluated based on compliance with the following criteria:

i. the minimum parcel size shall be 1.0 hectares (2.47 acres);

ii. the proposed light industrial use is non-polluting to land, water and air;

iii. it is demonstrated that adequate fire protection, and solid and environmental waste handling can be provided;

iv. the site is not located in, and will not cause industrial traffic to be routed along a local road through, a Small Rural Residential designated area;

v. adequate provision has been made for screening, fencing, buffering and/or landscaping the proposed use from adjoining properties; and

vi. There is adequate off-street parking.

d) All Industrial designated sites shall be designated as a development permit area.

## **F.7 DP-7 The Village Centre**

### **F.7.1 Applicability**

F.7.1.1 The following activities shall require a development permit whenever they occur within the

DPA, unless specifically exempted under Policy F.7.2.1:

- a. subdivision of land
- b. construction of, addition to, or alteration of a building or other structure
- c. alteration of land

F.7.1.2 In the event that a parcel of land is subject to more than one development permit area, all development permit area guidelines shall apply and only one development permit, containing conditions based on guidelines in all applicable development permit areas, is required.

### **F.7.2 Exemptions**

F.7.2.1 The following activities are exempt from any requirement for a development permit. Despite these exemption provisions, owners must satisfy themselves that they meet any other application local, provincial or federal requirements.

- a. building painting, structural alterations and repairs of a minor nature that do not require a building permit
- b. building repairs and maintenance where the materials to be used are of the same type and form as the existing materials
- c. the installation of carved wood signs on parcels where there are existing buildings, provided the signs do not exceed the maximum sizes permitted in this Bylaw
- d. The installation of bicycle racks, bicycle or bus shelters or electric vehicle charging stations;
- e. additions resulting in less than a 5% increase in floor area of a principal building or an accessory building where no changes to landscaping or access to the site are proposed.

### **F.7.3 Guidelines**

Prior to undertaking any development activities within DP-7, an owner of property shall apply to the Local Trust Committee for a development permit, and the following guidelines apply:

F.7.3.1 The character of each development shall be in keeping with the island environment and be capable of blending in with the aesthetic qualities of the natural surroundings.

F.7.3.2 The development shall incorporate small scale building designs with such amenities as public walkways and outdoor open spaces for use by the public.

F.7.3.3 Natural vegetation and trees shall be retained or planted and maintained for screening of parking and storage areas and to enhance the atmosphere of public open spaces. Safety and visibility shall be considered in landscape design.

F.7.3.4 Lighting should be kept to the minimum necessary for pedestrian safety and visibility, in order to maintain a low level of light in the night-time atmosphere.

F.7.3.5 Signs made from natural materials or incorporating material produced by local artisans and crafts people are encouraged.

F.7.3.6 Pedestrian requirements include accessible, safe and landscaped walkways connecting the street to the businesses.

F.7.3.7 Off-street parking shall be designed to be as unobtrusive as possible and where possible, located to the rear of the parcel away from public open spaces and eating areas and businesses should open to the street to create a greater sense of intimacy and walkability in the village core.

F.7.3.8 On-site integrated storm water management plans prepared by a qualified professional shall be required and implemented to reduce impervious cover, promote infiltration and capture and treat storm water runoff from 90% of the average annual rainfall using acceptable best management practices.

F.7.3.9 Where a building or use provides more than 25 parking spaces, one electric vehicle charging station capable of at least 110V and 220/240V charging must be provided and marked with a sign or symbol identifying the space is reserved for charging/parking an electric vehicle, electric scooter or electric bicycle.

F.7.3.10 Landscaping design and maintenance shall facilitate water retention, minimize the need for irrigation and discourage the use of lawns unless for a gathering or play area.

F.7.3.11 Landscaped islands of trees and shrubs no smaller in area than 4 square metres (43 square feet) each shall be used in parking areas located at a minimum of every 15 stalls to break up expanses of paving and parking and capture and infiltrate runoff.

F.7.3.12 Fifteen percent of the property shall be devoted to public open space with fifty percent of that amount along the road frontage. Storm water retention areas or rain gardens may be used to meet this requirement.

F.7.3.13 Seventy-five percent of the designated public open space shall be contiguous with no portion less than two metres in width and designated spaces shall be connected, where possible, to public pedestrian paths or access points on adjacent properties or roads.

F.7.3.14 Exterior surfaces of local and/or natural materials such as wood, stone or brick shall be encouraged.

F.7.3.15 Facilities for recycling shall be provided in garbage collection areas

# GABRIOLA OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN REVIEW

## Discussion Guides *ECONOMY*

### 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 the economy.

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.

## What does the current OCP say about commercial and industrial areas?

### Commercial Areas

OCP objectives focus on recognizing the Village Core as the Island's primary location for commercial activity. The Village Core area is included within a Development Permit Area, to ensure form and character are consistent. Criteria for expansion of the village core includes: adequate parking, integration of design and layout, and main road access. Other commercial areas are identified as secondary.

Only one site, the Twin Beaches Shopping Centre, is designated as District Commercial. Supported uses include retail, restaurants, personal service, offices, building supply sales and servicing and fueling vehicles. Expansion of the shopping centre beyond the existing parcel is not supported.

The Local Commercial designation permits site specific commercial uses to exist within neighbourhoods. These commercial uses are intended to be small-scale, and provide local convenience for a neighbourhood. Sites currently in this designation include the Wheelbarrel Nursery, Wild Rose Garden Centre, the restaurant site on North Road, and the small commercial area adjacent to BC Ferries terminal.

Tourist Commercial is concentrated and includes the Haven by the Sea, Surf Lodge, Dragon's Lodge, Page's Inn, Silva Bay Resort and Page's Resort and Marina. Zoning for campgrounds is permitted, but the OCP does not support timeshare developments.

### Home Occupations

Aside from lands specifically designated for commercial and industrial use, the OCP acknowledges home occupations as important to the Gabriola community. Home occupations are to be permitted in all zones where residences are allowed.

The OCP also notes the importance of establishing conditions of use for home occupations in the Land Use Bylaw such as: limiting floor area, creating a maximum number of employees, ensuring adequate parking, and specifying the types of businesses that can be home occupations.

### Temporary Use Permits

The OCP permits the use of Temporary Use Permits for the following uses: aggregate processing, barge load out site, log handling site, campground use, limited public markets, water sales, and commercial vacation rentals. Guidelines for each of these uses are included which provide direction to applicants.

### Industrial Land Use

The OCP supports small scale, non-polluting light industrial activities that contribute to Gabriola becoming more self-sufficient. Evaluation criteria for light industrial applications is included in the OCP and include limiting the use to non-polluting, ensuring adequate lot servicing, the location being outside of small rural residential areas, and ensuring adequate screening and buffering. The OCP does not support heavy industrial use. One single-dwelling is permitted per parcel designated commercial and industrial.



# Exploring resource lands

The OCP identifies three types of resources:

- **Forestry Lands:** Forestry lands are primarily for tree-growing and timber production. These areas aim to support sustainable forestry while preserving environmental and recreational values. The plan supports maintaining large parcels (minimum 60 hectares) and restricts subdivision except for ecological reserves.
- **Agricultural Lands:** Agricultural lands are designated in the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) and are vital to Gabriola's rural economy and character. Policies aim to preserve large parcels of farmland, limit subdivision, support small-scale agricultural operations, and encourage sustainable farming practices.
- **Aggregate Resources:** Extraction of aggregate resources (e.g., sand and gravel) falls under provincial control, but local government influences the processing activities. There are advocacy policies for limiting environmental impacts and requesting inventory assessments of resources.

Housing on land designated forestry, agriculture and resource lands is limited to one single-dwelling residential unit. Residential density can be transferred within areas designated forestry or resource through a density transfer where the donor parcel becomes conservation land and another parcel accepts the density that was given up (see the Housing discussion guide for additional details).

In addition to land use designation supporting the above, the OCP includes an additional resource designation that is not related to economy. Resource lands within this designation are large undeveloped parcels, typically over eight hectares. This designation encourages preserving rural landscapes and allowing residential density transfers within the Resource zone (see Housing discussion guide).

## What we heard

The Gabriola community engaged in a community visioning process from September 2023 to April 2024. Resource stewardship emerged as a key principle. This speaks to managing land and water resources responsibly to ensure their sustainability for future generations, protecting ecosystems, promoting sustainable practices, and engaging in conservation efforts.

There was limited feedback focussing on the economy in general. A number of community members identified the connection between having accessible housing for workers supporting local businesses and service.

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

## How do you feel about commercial and industrial areas and resource lands as they relate 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 the economy and resources, 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](https://islandstrust.bc.ca/island-planning/gabriola/projects/gabriola-ocpreview)

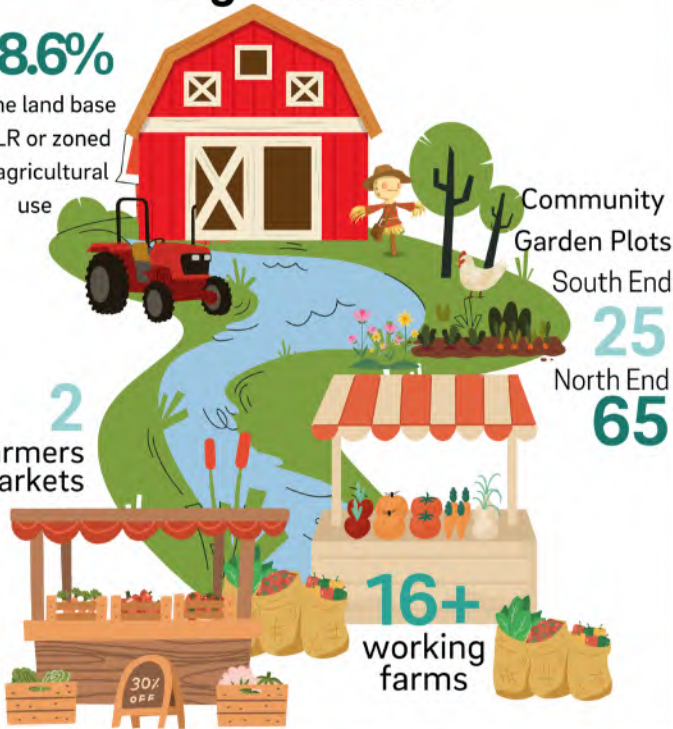
# GABRIOLA ISLAND community snapshot ECONOMY



## Agriculture

**18.6%**  
of the land base  
is ALR or zoned  
for agricultural  
use

**2**  
farmers  
markets



## Forestry

**0.15%** **350.95**  
of land parcels hectares of land  
are zoned for zoned for Forestry  
Forestry

that is roughly equivalent to:  
501 soccer fields (0.7 ha each)  
Slightly larger than Central Park, NY (341 ha)

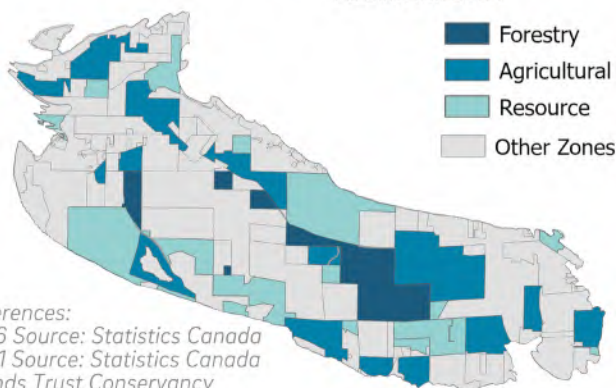
### Did you know...

Just 10% of the Vancouver Coastal  
region's food is produced locally.  
Gabriola Island and the Regional  
District of Nanaimo are at 19%



## Resource Lands

\*As Zoned in 2024



References:  
2016 Source: Statistics Canada  
2021 Source: Statistics Canada  
Islands Trust Conservancy  
2024 GaLTT  
2024 Sustainable Gabriola  
2024 Gabriola Health and Wellness Report

**Resource lands include natural resources (i.e. aggregate, agriculture and forestry), forestry resource land, agricultural land and environmental protection areas.**

Some of the ways they can benefit the community include:

- Supporting food security by allowing space on the island to produce its own food and reducing reliance on outside sources
- Maintaining agricultural and forestry areas can help mitigate climate impacts by enhancing carbon sequestration and protecting ecosystems that buffer against extreme weather events
- Enhancing the island's local economic viability and diversity

Learn more about  
next steps in  
the OCP review  
process



SCAN ME

Participate in the  
topic-focused  
survey



SCAN ME