

DATE OF MEETING: November 20, 2025

TO: Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee

FROM: Narissa Chadwick, Senior Planner
Local Planning Services

COPY: Stephen Baugh, Island Planner
Renee Jamarat, Regional Planning Manager

SUBJECT: OCP Project Update

RECOMMENDATION

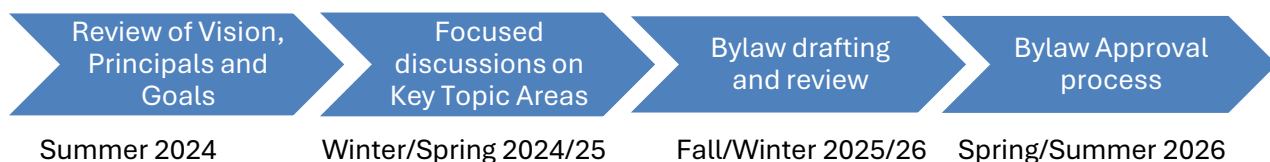
1. That the Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee request that staff include policies in the draft OCP related to subdivision, as recommended in the November 20, 2025 staff report.
2. That the Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee request include policies in the draft OCP related to options for rezoning for multiple units, as recommended in the November 20, 2025 staff report.
3. That the Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee request staff explore, with the RDN, the use of Temporary Use Permits for non-conforming dwellings that have applied for a building permit.
4. That the Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee request staff forward the model Development Permit Area (DPA) guidelines and the DPA prioritization list to the Gabriola DPA working group.

REPORT SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to provide an update of a number of topics related to the Gabriola OCP review. These include:

1. Updated workplan
2. The Gabriola buildout map
3. Changing subdivision potential
4. Options for non-conforming dwellings
5. Update to “What We Heard” Report
6. DPA Assessment

BACKGROUND



At the October 2025 LTC meeting, the LTC provided direction to staff to proceed with drafting Official Community Plan policies in accordance with the approved draft table of contents presented at the October 9, 2025 Local Trust Committee Meeting as well as revised project charter with minor amendments.

Staff are currently focussing on bylaw writing with the intention of having draft policy language by the February LTC meeting. Any additional tasks requested from staff related to the OCP will delay the project. A number of project updates, based primarily on LTC requests are provided below.

1. Updated Project Charter

The updated project charter is contained in Attachment 1. In addition to correcting dates (e.g. 2025 supposed to be 2026), Staff have reviewed the project charter in light of the 3 week labour disruption. Staff have attached a revised project charter. The only item that has been changed is the date of the water balance assessment report. This corresponds with the LTC meeting schedule. If the LTC would like the report on the water balance assessment they can request staff schedule a special meeting to review it. Staff note that given the 3 week labour dispute and in light of the need to balance focus on other projects, a February target for review of draft policy language is ambitious.

2. Gabriola Buildout Map

A hard copy of the Gabriola build out map will be provided to the LTC at the November meeting. It provides an indication of the number of potential additional lots that are possible based on existing subdivision potential as well as total buildout which considers both primary dwelling and secondary dwelling potential. The buildout map along with the suitable land analysis provides the basis for decisions related to “reimagining growth”- considering where dwelling density potential could be removed, moved or increased based on an analysis of data related to environmental and cultural heritage protection considerations.

3. Changing Subdivision Potential

Changes to subdivision potential has been part of the “reimagining growth” discussion that was introduced during the September 14, 2025 community workshop. At their October 2025 LTC meeting the LTC requested staff provide “options and potential consequences to the removal of subdivision potential to support the Gabriola OCP project”.

Recommended Option - Limiting subdivision potential to applications that deliver clear community benefits such as affordable housing, land conservation, or First Nations interests. All other subdivision would require a bylaw amendment (e.g. rezoning). This would ensure that future growth reflects shared community values. This approach prioritizes collective benefit over individual lot creation and encourages housing diversity through housing options such as secondary suites, cooperative models, and density bonusing, rather than land fragmentation. This is the approach that staff propose to be reflected in draft bylaws, as a foundational element of the OCP, unless otherwise directed by the LTC.

Alternatives –

Maintain status quo: Maintain existing subdivision potential across the island. Subdivisions would continue to be permitted without major restrictions.

Restrict Subdivision only within 200 metres of Natural Boundary of the Sea: Remove subdivision potential (except for community-benefit projects) for parcels within 200 metres of the shoreline. This addresses areas of high archaeological value, saltwater intrusion potential, and a number of other considerations. Property owners could still apply to rezone for subdivision.

Restrict Subdivision only within 200 metres of Natural Boundary of the Sea and in areas of known and potential archaeological sites: There appears to be archeological potential throughout most of the Islands. Locations will be confirmed through the archeological overview assessment. Property owners could still apply to rezone for subdivision.

Support only Parkland and Protected Areas Subdivisions: Removes all remaining subdivision potential except for parks and protected areas. All other subdivision applications would require a bylaw amendment (OCP and LUB) including affordable/special needs housing owned and operated by a non-profit, First Nation, or government agency.

Potential Consequences - Subdivision is one of the most influential tools shaping settlement patterns on Gabriola, yet subdivision potential has often been considered without fully accounting for environmental limits or cultural heritage impacts. Creating new lots rarely results in affordable or diverse housing; instead, it can increase land values, encourage speculation, and fragment larger parcels that might otherwise support ecological protection or community oriented housing options (e.g. land sharing, cluster housing).

Redirecting subdivision potential toward affordable housing, parks, and protected areas can better align development with community priorities, but it also raises concerns about overdevelopment in areas where density is redistributed, potential pressures on groundwater and septic systems, and questions of fairness in how benefits are allocated. Establishing clear criteria in policy, transparent decision-making processes, and grounding decisions in reliable environmental and archaeological data and understanding of First Nations interests will help address these concerns and maintain community trust. Impacts to property values is also a concern that may be raised. These impacts are difficult to quantify in light of the many other opportunities and requirements that may be integrated into the OCP and LUB review.

4. Options for Non-Conforming Dwellings

At their October LTC meeting, the LTC requested that staff provide options for supporting non-conforming dwellings, including Temporary Use Permits (TUPs), cob and natural building techniques, and non-manufactured tiny homes, in a manner that ensures health, safety, and environmental considerations are met.

Staff note that, without an occupancy permit issued by the Regional District of Nanaimo, there is no assurance that health and safety standards have been met, as regulatory oversight is limited. One approach used by other Local Trust Committees is to support the siting of dwellings that meet Canadian Standards Association (CSA) certification as an alternative means of verifying construction and safety where buildings do not meet the BC Building Code. For example, Mayne Island previously permitted the long-term residential use of RVs, but due to health and habitability concerns, these regulations are being amended to allow RVs only through TUPs for temporary use. Mayne Island has also introduced regulations supporting tiny homes that meet CSA certification, and staff intend to incorporate similar direction in the draft OCP.

TUPs could be used on Gabriola to allow for cob and other natural building forms that do not conform to building code requirements. This would enable the LTC to evaluate and manage environmental and cultural heritage impacts. However, it is important to note that TUPs do not ensure compliance with health and safety standards in the absence of an occupancy permit. The OCP include policies related to permitting the use of TUPs to support non-conforming dwellings that have applied for a building permit with the RDN. Discussion with the RDN is required before this type of approach is considered.

Changes to the Gabriola OCP to permit rezoning for multiple dwellings on a lot may provide a pathway to compliance for existing dwellings that are currently not conforming with Gabriola dwelling density and siting regulations. Staff are working on policy language to support the options below. Evaluation criteria, based on available data, related to review of rezoning applications and processes (including LTC initiated) will be included.

- **Cluster Housing:** A development form in which several smaller detached or semi-detached dwellings are grouped on a single lot, often sharing common open space and infrastructure. Housing agreements are required and floor area limits are recommended.
- **Small Unit Clustered Housing:** Similar to cluster housing, but focused on small or mobile units (e.g., tiny homes, manufactured homes) with shared facilities. Housing agreements required and floor area limits recommended.
- **Flexible Housing:** multiple additional dwelling units within a maximum combined floor area, based on lot size. Would not require housing agreements.
- **Density Bonus:** Allow additional density if specific criteria are met, e.g., conservation covenant registration, affordable housing contributions, or land donation to First Nations

5. Update to “What We Heard” Report

At the October 2025 LTC meeting the LTC requested staff update the “What We Heard” report to include details related to support for housing options. These have been added (see Attachment 2).

6. DPA Assessment

At the May LTC meeting the LTC requested staff provide an assessment of possible DPAs to update as part of OCP review. While the update of DPAs for Gabriola is important as the existing site specific DPAs limit protection of environmental and other interests at a broader island scale, staff have identified that updating DPAs as a part of the current OCP review will push the completion of the OCP review out many months and potentially years depending on the data required. The 2026/27 budget has not included funding for DPA work. However, Staff recommend including a DPA priority list in the implementation section of the revised OCP. To facilitate consideration of priorities, an analysis of DPA priority is provided below. This is provided for information only, to be discussed in more detail following a presentation of draft bylaws in February 2026.

The DPA options are numbered in Table 1 based on staff recommended ranking. Key criteria considered including whether there is available data, if there is a model DPA created (model DPAs were created by the Regional Planning Team based on existing DPAs in the Islands Trust Area), feedback from focus groups, survey results and other submissions. Community input from surveys, focus groups, and written submissions strongly supports expanding Development Permit Areas (DPAs) to protect Gabriola’s natural and built environment. Residents highlighted the importance of safeguarding riparian areas, marine shorelines, sensitive ecosystems, endangered habitats, old or large trees, and carbon-sequestering ecosystems such as wetlands and forests.

There was also strong support for DPAs that address natural hazards, including forest fire risk and erosion on steep or unstable slopes, encouraging FireSmart landscaping, native species planting, and slope-sensitive development. Focus group participants identified interest in DPAs to guide the form and character of multi-unit residential, commercial, and industrial development. Updating DPA mapping and guidelines was seen as essential to reflect current environmental and hazard data, ensuring that new development supports ecological protection, climate resilience, and the island’s unique character.

Table 1 – DPA Options

Type of DPA	Staff Rank	Are there examples in the IT area? Is there a Model?	Is there up to date Data?	What does the community think?	Staff recommendation
Critical Aquifer Recharge	1	Examples – GL Model - yes	Yes- recent data	A key priority	Major Priority – Could be minor project due to existing data and applied methodology
Steep Slopes	2	Examples – GB, GL, NP, SS, Model- No	Yes- province has updated data	A lower priority	Medium priority
Shorelines and Marine Areas	3	Examples– B-W, GL, GM, SS Model - yes	No -would need to update data	Strong interest	Priority – to support community and SFN interests
Endangered Species Habitat	4	No Examples No Model	Yes – provincial updates annually	Strong interests	Medium priority
Riparian Areas	5	Yes – all LTCs	Yes – 2019 data from province	Related to wetland protection,	Priority -Current DPA relies on outdated information
Fire Resilience	6	No Examples No Model	No- data needed	Strong interest	Priority – support community resilience.
Sensitive Ecosystems	7	Examples– GL, NP Model - Yes	No – would need to update data	Strong interest.	Priority - would require detailed studies to update data
Forested Areas	8	No Examples No Model	No – would need to update	Strong interest.	Priority – start with assessment of land
Wetlands	9	No Examples No Model	No – would need to update	Strong interest.	Medium Priority – related to groundwater
Habitat Corridors	10	No Examples No Model	No – would need to explore	A secondary priority.	Medium priority

Form and Character DPA – not included in chart as these can be created when there are specific changes to bylaws in particular locations and they do not require data.

As staff will be focussing on preparing a draft Bylaw, no additional attention will be given to DPAs unless directed by the LTC. Staff note that any additional work requests will push timelines for OCP completion. Staff recognize that there is a Gabriola community group that has been focussing on Development Permit Areas. For this reason, staff have recommended that the LTC direct staff to provide this group DPAs with the table above as well as model DPAs for feedback on prioritization by February 2026.

NEXT STEPS

- Staff will draft OCP policy language
- Staff will present OCP language to LTC for review
- Public will have an opportunity to review and provide comment on draft policy language
- OCP draft will be read for the first time
- OCP draft will be read for the second time
- CIM and Public Hearing
- OCP will be read for the third time
- OCP will be sent to Province for approval
- OCP will be approved by LTC

Submitted By:	Narissa Chadwick RPP MCIP, Senior Planner	November 10, 2025
Concurrence:	Renee Jamurat RPP MCIP, Regional Planning Manager	November 12, 2025

ATTACHMENTS

1. Project Charter

StafGabriola Island Official Community Plan(OCP) and Land Use Bylaw (LUB) Review Project (Phase 2)- Charter

Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee (LTC) Date: November 2025 (Version 5)

Purpose: To explore, through targeted engagement specific questions related to key topics relevant to the OCP and LUB review and begin to draft OCP policies and identify related LUB changes needed to support these policies .

Background: An OCP describes the long-term vision for a community, through policy statement that guide decisions on planning and land use. An LUB contains regulations to implement the OCP policies. The Gabriola OCP have not been updated since 1997 and the LUB since 1999. The 2024/25 Gabriola Island OCP and LUB Comprehensive Review will address a number of issues of importance to the Gabriola Community. In Phase 1 (2023/24 helped to identify vision and values of the community. From these, a number of principles, upon which to base OCP revised policies, has emerged. \$77,000 has been allocated to this project from the 2024/25 Trust Council Budget. \$50,000 of this has been allocated to do a water availability assessment which will inform decisions related to the location of additional density and the protection of land.

Objectives Through targeted and focussed engagement on specific topic areas, begin to draft OCP policies and identify related LUB changed based on the values and principles emerging from Phase 1.	In Scope <ul style="list-style-type: none">First Nations Engagement.Public education and engagement activities.Target and focussed engagement with relevant partiesIdentifying related LUB changes needed to support revised OCP policies	Out of Scope <ul style="list-style-type: none">New DPA mapping
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Workplan Overview	
Deliverable/Milestone	Date
First Nations consultation	ongoing
Suitable Land and Build Out Analysis	February 2025
Community Profile	June 2025
Topic Focussed Engagement	Jan 2025 – May 2025
Engagement on Growth Management	September 2025
Water balance assessment report to LTC	November 2025 February 2025
Milestone: LTC Review of draft policy language	February 2026
Public Engagement - review of OCP draft policy language and DPA prioritization	February – April 2025
Milestone: First Reading	April 2026
Legal Review as needed	April 2026 – June 2026
Public Review of draft bylaws/referrals	April 2026 – June 2026
Phase 3 of Project(LUB Review, DAI, AOA) Initiated	June 2026
Milestone: Second/Third Reading	June-September 2026

Project Team	
Regional Planning Manager	Renée Jamurat
Regional Planning Team Member	Narissa Chadwick/ Sonja Zupanec
Planning Team Assistant	Shalini Nakai
Gabriola Planner	Stephen Baugh

Budget		
Budget Sources:		
26/27	Communication and Engagement	\$6,000
	Arch Overview Ass.	\$25,000
	Legal + contingency	\$4,000
TOTAL		\$35,000

