

SOUTH PENDER ISLAND TRUSTEES

February 10, 2024

HOUSE SIZE REVIEW

The trustees are reviewing Land Use Bylaw 114 regarding house size – including the recent changes recently enacted in the bylaws to reduce house sizes to a reasonable overall total based on lot size in keeping with the rural character of the Island, one of the main goals of the Islands Trust and the Community plan for South Pender.

We would like to express our support for leaving the present house sizes as they presently are adopted under the Official Community Plan and feel they are entirely consistent with the overall objective of the plan to preserve and protect the rural character of the island.

Almost all existing housing on South Pender fits within the square footage allowed under the existing new guidelines established based on lot size. For the very few that fall outside the guideline the present OCP specifies that any existing legal structure is deemed legal under the new provisions and can be replaced to the same size as existing if the present size contravenes the new bylaw. That will mean there is no hardship for any existing homeowners.

Of the existing lots on South Pender, less than 15% do not have a dwelling on them, and the existing dwellings are on average less than 60% of the new dwelling size allowed in the LUB and about 1/3 the size of what was allowed under the old size restrictions. That means that under the old bylaws the average house size on the Island could become 3 times larger than the present existing house size. In my estimation this would have an irretrievable effect on the rural characteristics of the Island. Even with the new size limits the existing house size could expand by an average of 40% over the average current size, which is plenty to allow for upgrades as needed. In my estimation the new existing house size limits are very generous and will still have a major effect on the Island rural character and ecological footprint on the Island ecosystem and consideration might be given to reducing them still further in the years ahead. The old size limits would make everything much worse and complicate siting and setbacks given the size of house possible to build.

The other major consideration is as larger homes more expensive homes are built, the nature of the composition of people who can afford to live here changes, as the Island becomes a place for the wealthy with fewer young families or young couples able to afford to live and contribute to the rural ambience of the community. Many of the more

recent large buildings are owned by off Island residents who come seasonally and contribute little to Island life or work to enhance the rural character of the community.

The OCP also allows anyone planning new buildings to apply for variance in special circumstances. The cost of the variance is very reasonable, provides the flexibility needed when required, and allows neighbours and the community in general to comment on the appropriateness of any variance proposal.

In all we feel the existing bylaw is appropriately worded, presents no hardship to any existing property owner, and provides clear and useful guidelines for all new construction. We fully support the bylaws as presently enacted.

Robert Dill and Karen Mani Lang

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