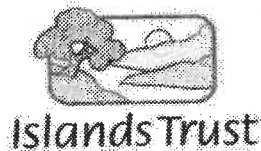


Trustee Notebook *By Laura Busheikin*



Housing Needs by the Numbers

Here on Denman, we're older, poorer, more likely to live alone, and have a smaller range of affordable housing options than our neighbours in the rest of the Comox Valley and BC as a whole.

Those are just a few of the statistics gathered in the recently-released Denman Island Housing Needs Assessment, all of which, taken together, tell a numerical story that solidly substantiates the anecdotal stories Denmanites have been sharing and hearing for years:

Housing needs

- Over 66% of renters are paying more than 30% of their gross income on shelter (this meets the standard definition of unaffordable)
- 12.9% of households on Denman fall into the Core Housing Needs category (an estimated 76 households, affecting 144 people)
- 83% of survey respondents said they are aware of people living in unaffordable, illegal and inappropriate housing on Denman

Demographics

- 20% of the population are seniors in the low income brackets
- 13% of the population are single-parent families
- 49.5% of Denman Islanders are between 55 and 74, compared to 32.6% for the Comox Valley and 25.15% for B.C. as a whole.

Income

- The average income on Denman was \$62,025, 23.6% (\$20,000) lower than the Comox Valley and 43.6% lower than BC;
- The median income of lone-parent families is 56.6% lower than the Comox Valley, and 79.3% lower than BC (similar disparities exist, although less pronounced, for all family compositions)
- 38% of Denmanites fall into the no, low and low-moderate income levels

Note that these statistics come from the 2016 census, which offers a broad-strokes snapshot of the Island at a certain point in time.

What does all this mean? The report states that, on Denman, "the no, low and even moderate income households have difficulty accessing the housing market" and identifies a "severe lack of affordable rental options." The report also quantifies a hypothetical average affordable

purchase price for Denman of \$232,000—well below what's available on the market.

The report concludes that "Denman Island now requires up to 80 affordable housing units," with a potential need for up to 165 units over the next 25 years."

This document is primarily intended as a resource to guide policy, support advocacy, and encourage appropriate funding. It contains plenty more statistics, along with graphs and charts and descriptions of methodology, as well as the results of a survey and a stakeholder meeting, and is available at

http://www.islandstrust.bc.ca/media/346025/lpc_2018-06-21_northern_hna.pdf.

Denman's Housing Needs Assessment will fulfill the new provincial government requirement for all local governments to have housing needs assessments in place.

The bigger question—how to improve the situation—is another subject altogether, and one the Denman Island Local Trust Committee (LTC) is planning to explore. At its June meeting, the LTC placed "affordable and attainable housing" on its Top Priorities List, which means this is now a priority project.

Denman's Official Community Plan and Land Use Bylaw already offer some options and supports for affordable and attainable housing, but it is time to ask, "What more can we do?" The LTC is not authorized nor funded to hold land or build housing; our powers lie in developing land use regulations that are supportive of community needs. We can also provide information to the public and advocate to other levels of government about this crucial topic.

There are some ideas and suggestions about how to do this on the Trust website, for anyone who wants to poke around at <http://www.islandstrust.bc.ca/trust-council/projects/housing/>. I recommend in particular the report *Community Housing in the Trust Area* and the 2010 *Islands Trust Community Housing Tool Kit*.

Upcoming Community Meeting on the Denman Farm Plan Implementation

August 2, 2018; 6:00 pm – 8:00pm; Denman Activity Centre

Learn about, and comment on, a set of proposed bylaw amendments to implement Denman's Farm Plan, aimed at supporting farming and food security on the Island. For more info see insert from the July 26 Grapevine or the website: <http://www.islandstrust.bc.ca/islands/local-trust-areas/denman.aspx>.