



Islands Trust

GABRIOLA OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN REVIEW

Discussion Guides

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION



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 environmental protection.

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.

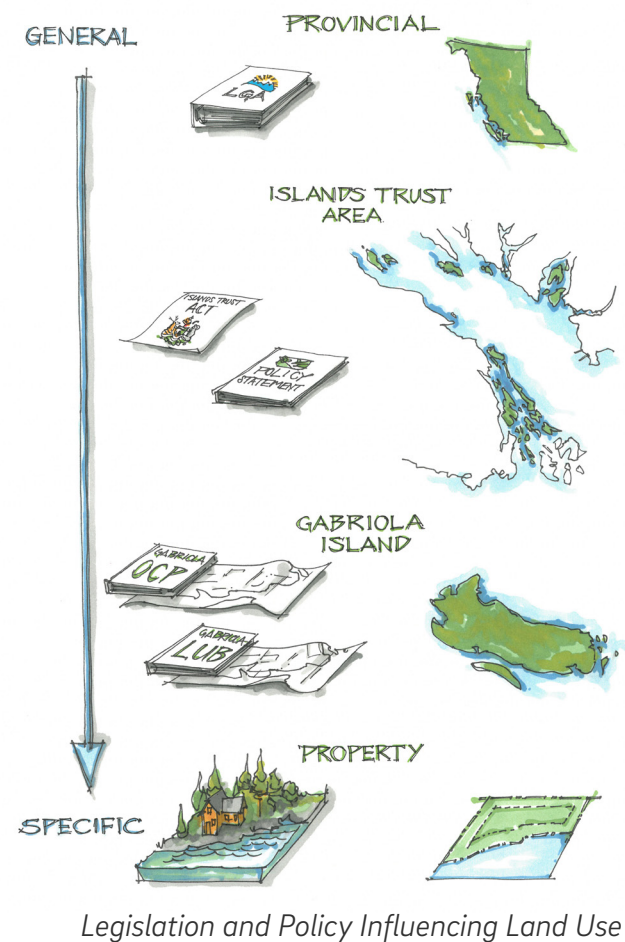
The OCP must align with higher level policies.

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 Environmental Protection?

Environmental protection interests are articulated through most parts of the OCP including:

- Encouragement of acquisition of land for parks and protected areas
- Recognition of the need to protect groundwater, manage waste and mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change

Environmental protection is addressed specifically in sections devoted to Environmentally Sensitive Areas and Marine Resources.

The OCP points to Environmentally Sensitive Areas, and emphasizes the protection of critical ecosystems on Gabriola Island, including marine foreshores, watercourses, wetlands, and woodland ecosystems, which are biologically rich and vulnerable to development. Objectives focus on safeguarding habitats and water resources through vegetation retention, building setbacks, and collaboration with conservation groups. Policies include regulating development with development permits, encouraging voluntary covenants, and protecting unique and sensitive sites.

The Marine Resources section of the OCP emphasizes the protection of marine and foreshore areas, including particularly sensitive areas like Gabriola Pass and around the Flat Top Islands. Objectives in the Marine Resources section include protecting marine ecosystems, scenic coastal values, and supporting responsible commercial and aquaculture activities that do not harm the environment or public enjoyment of marine areas. Policies encourage regulation of marine activities, encourage sharing of docks, and do not support construction and material deposition in marine or foreshore areas. Any new or expanded marine developments must minimize ecological damage and recreational conflicts.

Exploration of Environmental Protection

Development Permit Areas (DPA) are one of the most significant land use tools that can be used to address environmental protection. They do this by establishing guidelines for future development that can minimize ecological damage and preserve ecological integrity. The Gabriola OCP recognizes this, however, the use of this tool is limited since almost all DPAs established for environmental protection are specific to a particular place on the Island. For example, the DP-2 Lock Bay is established to protect the foreshore and marine riparian area in the vicinity of Lock Bay, but the only other shoreline area protected through a DPA is the Flat Top Islands Area.

DPAs can have a broader influence on environmental protection if they are developed in consideration of the environmental value that the local government would like to protect (eg. sensitive ecosystem protection, ground water aquifer protection) as opposed to focusing on individual areas.

There are other land use tools available for environmental protection that could be supported with OCP policies. These include:

- **Covenants:** are flexible and can be tailored to specific properties, they also “run with the land” meaning they offer long term protection of a particular place. However, covenants are generally limited in scope, applying to specific parcels or sections of specific parcels. They can also be difficult to monitor, enforce compliance with, and they require a willing land owner.

- **Density Transfer:** This allows developers to transfer density from one area to another, which can protect sensitive lands while accommodating growth. However, this tool is complex to use and favours large land holders with the property holdings to transfer and receive density, along with the resources to navigate the complex process.
- **Zoning Regulations:** Offers a variety of tools which can establish guidelines for development to support protection of the environment. They offer consistency and predictability for the community. However, zoning regulations can be somewhat inflexible to adapt to changing needs.
- **Subdivision Regulations:** are a subset of zoning regulations which can encourage environmentally sensitive design at an early stage of development. They can also limit development to a level that can be sustained by the natural environment. Strict regulations may increase cost for developers which is ultimately passed down to those purchasing land.

What we Heard

The Gabriola community engaged in a community visioning process from September 2023 to April 2024. The process led to the identification of values, principles and goals.

Community engagement to date has revealed environmental protection to be a central interest for the community. Environmental stewardship and sustainability were identified as key values. Related goals include protecting biodiversity, reducing climate change impacts, water conservation and protection of freshwater recharge areas, protecting wildlife corridors, prioritizing fire resilience and incorporating Indigenous perspectives into land use decisions. This focus supports the community identified principles of stewardship, resilience, equity, protection, and reconciliation.

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 environmental protection 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 environmental protection, 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



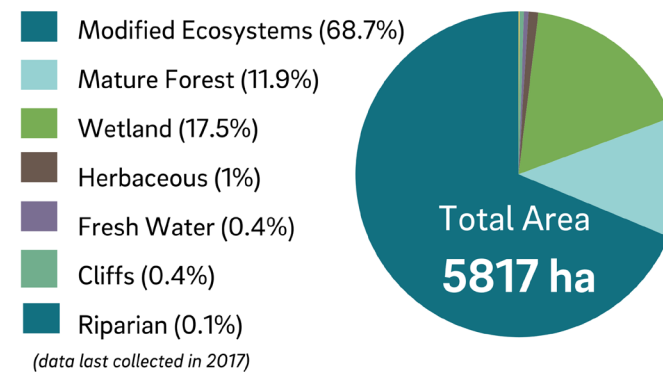
www.surveymonkey.com/r/GabriolaOCPFocus

GABRIOLA ISLAND community snapshot ENVIRONMENT



Sensitive Ecosystems

Across the Gabriola Local Trust Area



(data last collected in 2017)

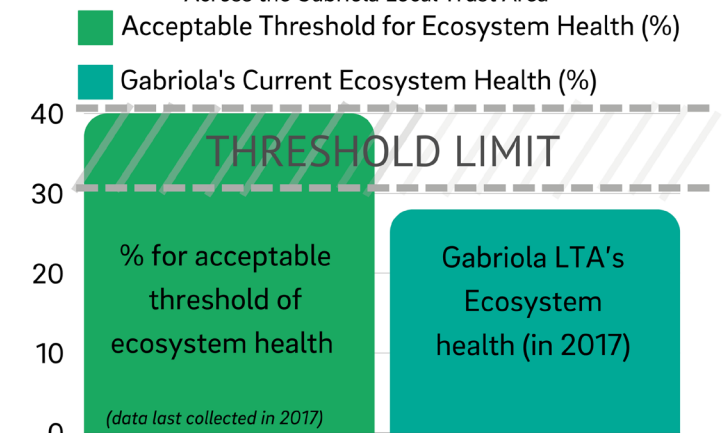
Did you know...

that once land conversion exceeds 30-40%, the number of species in that habitat can decline much more rapidly



Ecosystem Health

Across the Gabriola Local Trust Area



(data last collected in 2017)

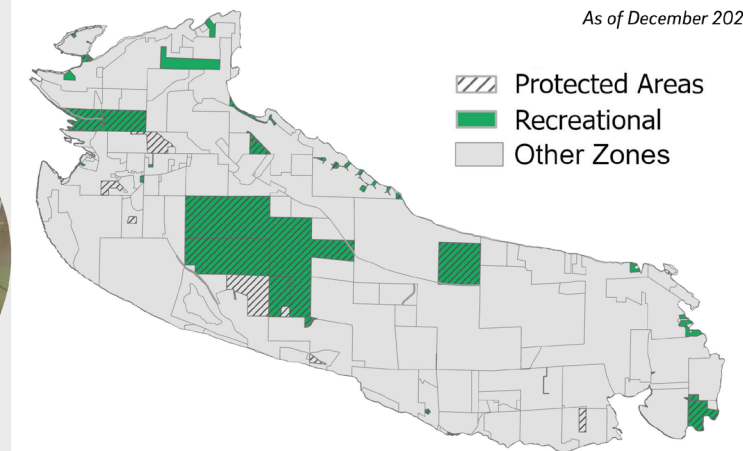
An ecosystem threshold is a critical point that, when crossed, leads to significant and often irreversible changes in an ecosystem. For example, when natural habitats are converted to agricultural land or urban development, the ecosystem can shift from supporting diverse wildlife to becoming dominated by human use. Typically, research indicates that if a certain percentage—often between 30% and 40%—of a habitat is altered or lost, the ecosystem can no longer function effectively, leading to dramatic shifts in biodiversity and ecosystem services

Some Species at Risk



Recreational & Protected Areas

As of December 2024

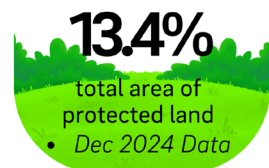
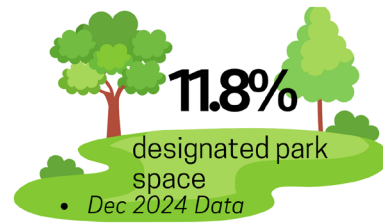


References:
 2011 & 2024 Gabriola Rescue of Wildlife Society (GROWLS)
 2016 Source: Statistics Canada
 2021 Source: Statistics Canada
 2017 Islands Trust Conservancy

GABRIOLA ISLAND community snapshot RESOURCE, PARKS & OPEN SPACE



Park & Open Spaces



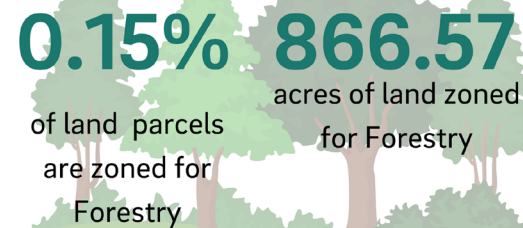
18.6%

of the land base is ALR or zoned for agricultural use

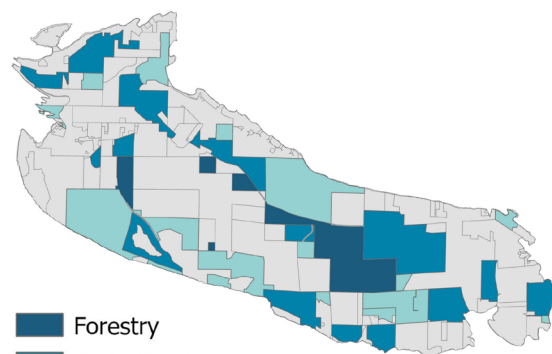


Agriculture

Forestry



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



■ Forestry
■ Agricultural
■ Resource
■ Other Zones

*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

GABRIOLA ISLAND community snapshot CLIMATE CHANGE



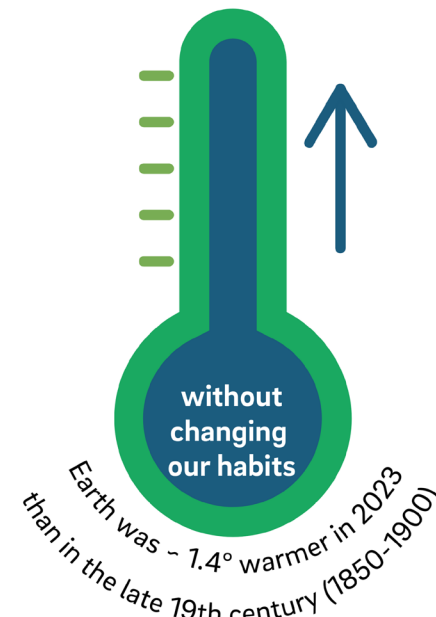
Annual Temperature Trends

Trends

+4.0 °
warmer
by 2080

+2.5 °
warmer
by 2050

*Compared to pre-industrial temperatures



Sea Level Trends

Since 1990, sea levels along the coast of B.C. have risen by

-3.5 mm per year

By **2050***, they may rise by an additional

+30 - 60cm

(*under high-emission scenarios)

By **2100*** they may reach up to

+1 m

these changes could impact:

12.86%

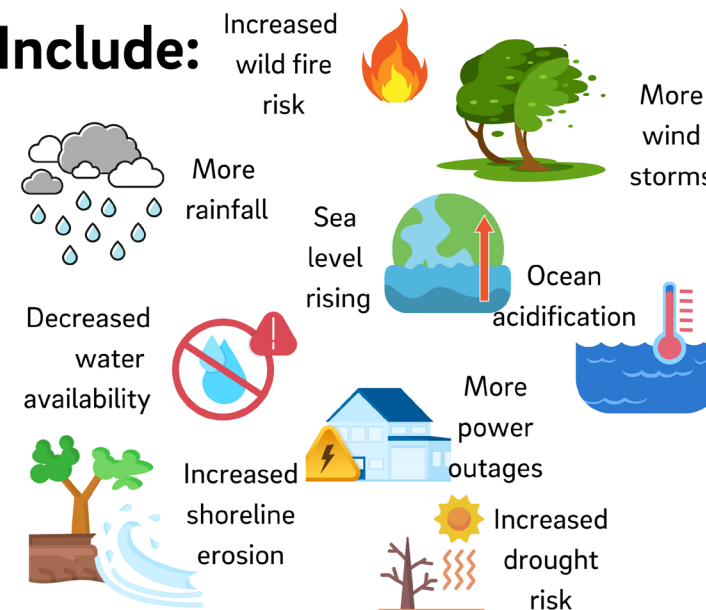
of residential lots that are within 10m of the coastline of Gabriola

18.93%

of residential lots that are along the coastline of Gabriola

Impacts on the Community

Include:



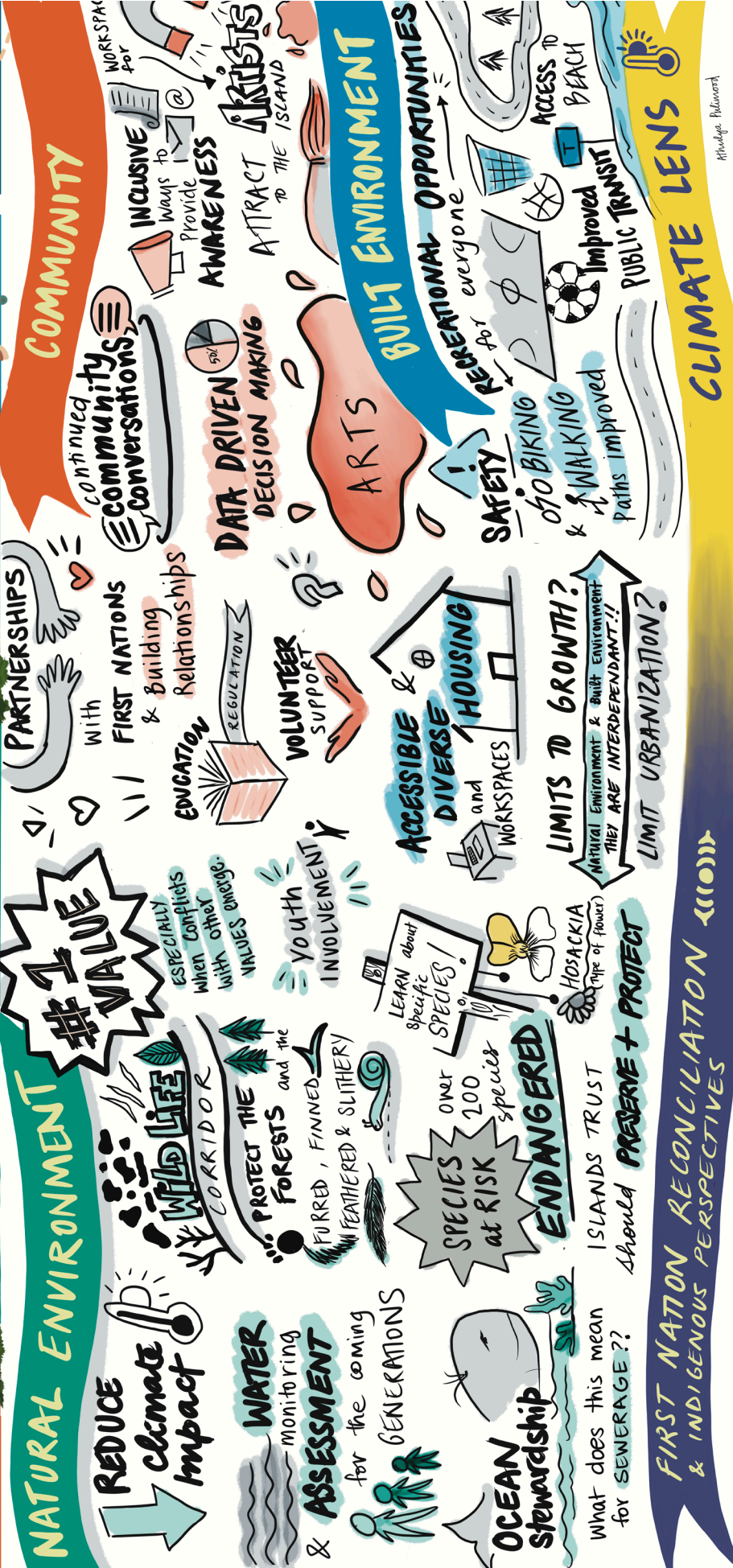
Did you know...

Some of the ways effective land use planning can reduce risk is by avoiding development near shores, creating sea level rise informed setbacks, fresh water sustainability planning and promoting fire-resilience (e.g. keeping subdivisions away from forests)



References:
2016 Source: Statistics Canada
2021 Source: Statistics Canada
Islands Trust Conservancy

GABRIOLA VISIONING 2050
 Community Engagement | 23 March 2024
 Live digital graphic Resonance by Athuduga Redwood



Athuduga Redwood



SCAN ME

Participate in the topic-focused survey



SCAN ME

Learn more about next steps in the OCP review process