



Islands Trust

GABRIOLA OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN REVIEW

Discussion Guides

HOUSING



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 housing.

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.

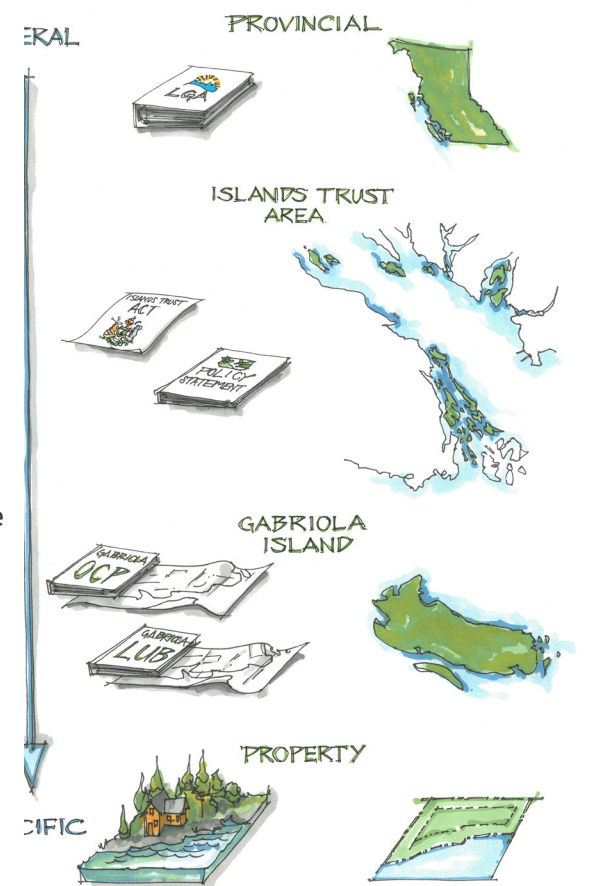
The OCP must align with higher level policies.

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 housing?

Housing policy in the OCP focuses on gradual growth and change with a key focus on preserving and protecting the environment. It emphasises that no additional land should be designated for residential use and limits the creation of new small lot residential areas.

Multi-dwelling residential developments on Gabriola Island are allowed only for special needs residents, seniors, or as affordable housing. “Affordable housing” refers to homes rented or owned under a housing agreement that’s registered on title in favor of the Local Trust Committee.

The Official Community Plan (OCP) sets specific conditions for affordable housing developments, such as being near the village core and having access to a sufficient water supply. These developments can include up to 12 residential units per hectare, with a maximum of 24 units in a single project. Each unit can be no larger than 900 square feet, which is roughly the size of a two-bedroom suite.

Secondary suites are permitted on properties that are 2 hectares (5 acres) or larger. Separate accessory dwelling units (ADUs) are considered single-family affordable housing and are also permitted on properties that are 2 hectares (5 acres) or larger, but should not exceed 65 square metres (700 square feet).

In addition to these options, one residential unit is permitted in commercial, resource, forestry and residential land use designations. Community care facility licensed group homes are permitted in any land use designation where single dwelling residential use is permitted.

Mobile home parks or clusters of small homes (on wheels or otherwise) are not currently allowed under the OCP. Additionally, the OCP prohibits strata conversions of existing buildings, which means individual ownership of separate units in an existing building is not supported.

Exploring housing

The Gabriola Island OCP’s conservative approach to increasing housing density is partially based on the assumption that densities existing on undeveloped land can accommodate housing needs. Increases in property and building costs over the past two decades has led to property/housing ownership being out of range for many earning a low to moderate income. While there are close to 600 undeveloped parcels of land these are likely not accessible to many residents who currently reside or work in the community.

In a 2018 engagement, community members identified unaffordable housing relative to income, lack of available housing options, and insecure tenure as the top three challenges to housing on Gabriola Island (Dillon, 2018). Housing insecurity has led to Gabriola Island residents living in tiny homes, in cars, and in illegal dwellings. Gabriola Island continues to experience decreases in affordable housing options.

In 2019, the Gabriola Island Local Trust Council (LTC) began its Housing Options and Impacts Review Project with a focus on developing new policies and regulations to promote an increase in housing options on Gabriola Island. The recommendations also considered protection of the island’s groundwater supply, biodiversity and sensitive ecosystems. The Housing Options and Impacts Review Project led to a series of land use planning recommendations, with further recommendations coming from the Housing Advisory Planning Commission (HAPC).

What we heard about housing

What were the Housing Advisory Planning Commission (HAPC)'s recommendations?

The Gabriola HAPC met several times in late 2023 and early 2024 to consider a range of housing options. The HAPC had several recommendations related to the OCP:

- Increasing density in the village core by increasing the permitted number of dwelling units on all parcels over 1 ha
- Increasing the number of residential units allowed within commercial developments to be proportional to the commercial floor area
- Zoning suitable properties in the village core to increase residential density and allow for mixed market and affordable housing
- Increasing opportunities for building secondary suites and accessory dwelling units
- Permitting alternative forms of housing (e.g. tiny homes and RVs)
- Creating zoning for clusters of manufactured tiny and mobile homes
- Permitting strata subdivision of properties that already have a dwelling, allowing for separate ownership of portions of a lot

What we heard from the community

The Gabriola community engaged in a community visioning process September 2023- April 2024. Through this process, the values of the Gabriola community and their principles and goals emerged.

Social equity and wellbeing was identified as a key value. A diversity of housing options was identified as an important component of social equity and well being. Community members identified a need for accessible and affordable housing. This focus supports the community identified principles of community resilience and equity and the goal of supporting 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/>

Density Bank and Density Transfer

The density bank and density transfer policies in the current OCP are related to how much additional housing there can be on Gabriola and how the number of properties for housing can be increased in some areas.

What is a Density Bank?

The Density bank is a tool which enables residential densities from land that will not be developed to be deposited in to a "bank" to be withdrawn in the future for use in creating multi-unit special needs seniors and affordable housing.

Withdrawing densities from the density bank requires that a housing agreement be in place. Adding and removing densities from the density bank is done through the rezoning and OCP amendment process.

There are not currently any densities in the density bank. The density bank has never been used.

What is Density Transfer?

On Gabriola Island, the only way additional subdivision potential for residential lots can be created is through density transfer. Density transfer only applies to land within the Resource and Forestry Land Use Designations. It allows for residential density to be transferred from large parcels of land to other areas of the Island which enables the creation of additional residential lots. In both the Resource and Forestry Land Use Designations, for every 8 hectares of land that is conserved, one residential density may be transferred to land in the Resource zone.

Density transfers involve a donor parcel and a receiver parcel. Through the density transfer, the donor parcel becomes conservation land and the receiver parcel is given the zoning to be subdivided beyond what was previously permitted. Each lot that is subdivided is permitted one principal dwelling. On lots 2 hectares or larger a secondary suite is also permitted.

Exploration of Density Transfer and Density Bank

Strengths:

- Density transfer and density bank policies are designed with ecological protection in mind.
- Density Transfers focus residential development in a specific area and preserve large blocks of land with significant environmental features, archaeological sites and/or forested area.
- Both "density transfers" and the "density bank" aim to focus residential development in areas which are more suitable for development in order to preserve other areas which should remain undeveloped or used for non-residential purposes.

Weaknesses:

- The principles and values that inform the density transfer and density bank policies are compelling, but are cumbersome to apply.
- Density transfer and density bank policies do not allow for a net increase in density.
- Density transfer and density bank policies place a cap on housing supply which can result in stagnant supply and contribute to increasing property costs.
- The density bank has never been used.

How do you feel about housing 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 housing, 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



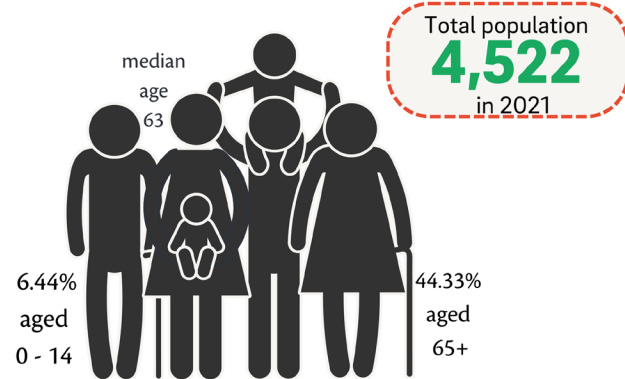
SCAN ME

www.surveymonkey.com/r/GabriolaOCPFocus

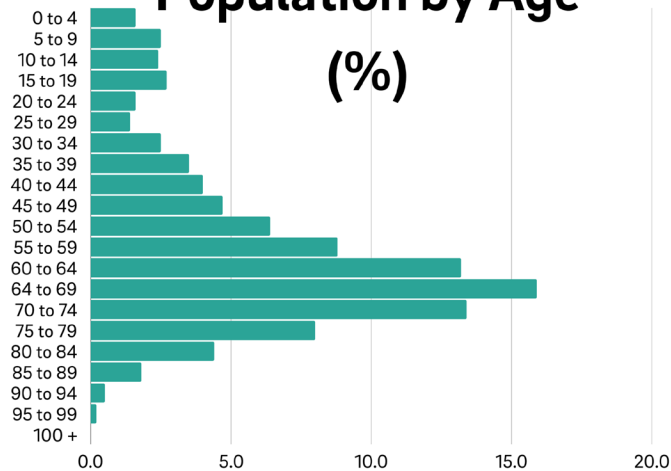
GABRIOLA ISLAND community snapshot DEMOGRAPHICS



At a Glance

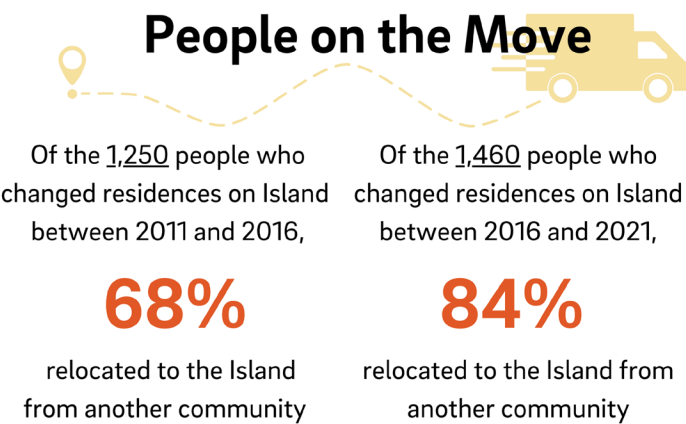


Population by Age (%)

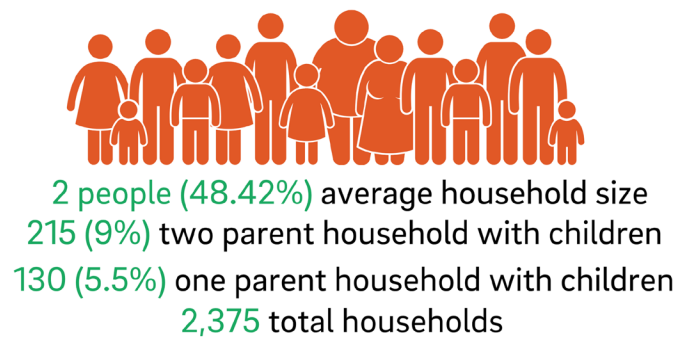


1 in every **2.3** residents is over the age of 65+

66% of the current population will be **85+** by 2050



Households



References:
2016 Source: Statistics Canada
2021 Source: Statistics Canada

Did you know... Nanaimo is in the top 5 fastest growing metropolitan areas in Canada (+10% from 2016-2021)

GABRIOLA ISLAND LTA community snapshot HOUSING



Residential Housing

- Single detached homes
- Semi-detached homes
- Multi-unit dwellings
- Movable dwellings
- Other single-attached houses
- Apartment or flat in a duplex



Did you know...

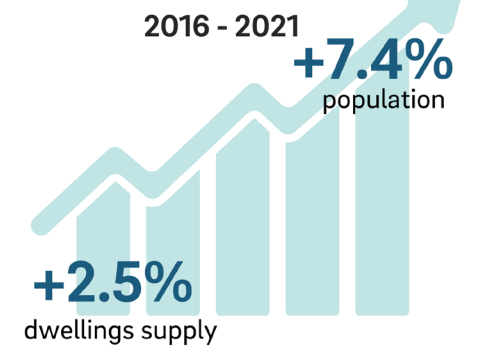
52% of renters are spending 30% or more of their income on housing costs

Unhoused Population

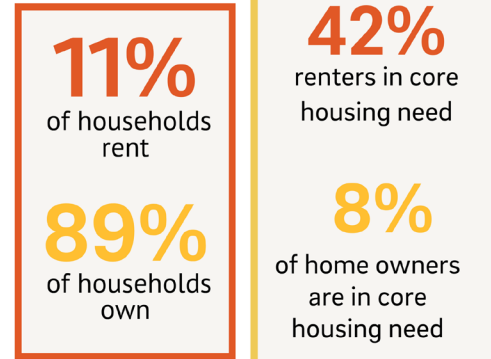


Includes individuals without permanent housing, those living in cars, couch surfing, or residing in homes without essential utilities like a bathroom or kitchen.

Growth Changes



Renters vs. Owners

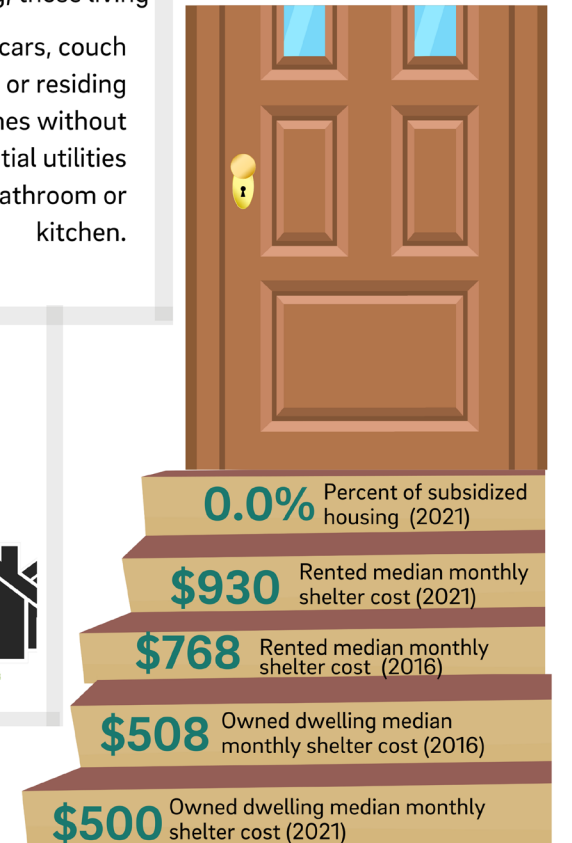


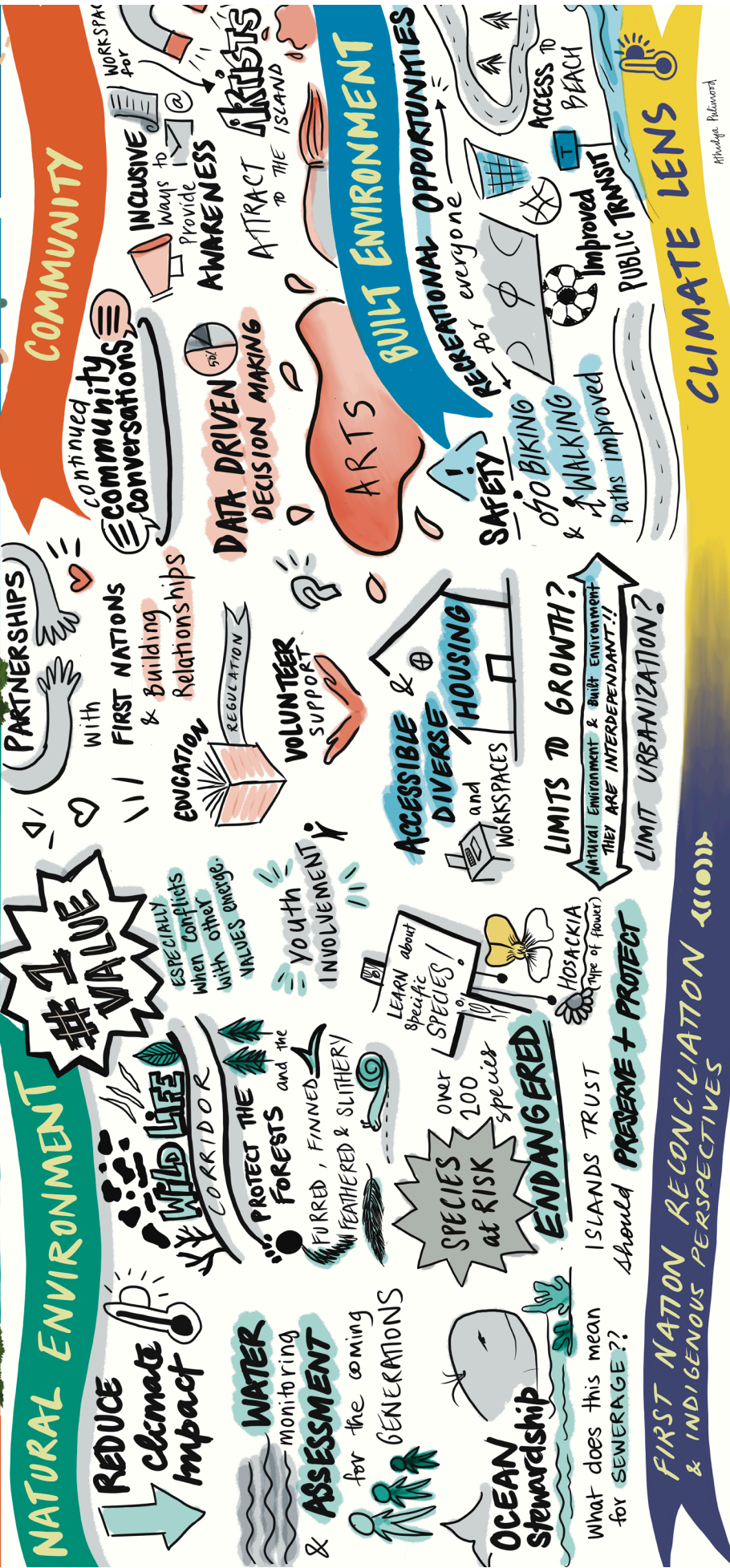
Reference & Sources:
Gabriola Health and Wellness Report 2024
Statistics Canada 2021
Statistics Canada 2016

Residential Availability



Cost of Shelter Trends





Learn more about next steps in the OCP review process



Participate in the topic-focused survey

SCAN ME

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