

Gabriola Housing Advisory Planning Commission

Options for increasing the availability and affordability of housing on Gabriola Island, 2024

The Gabriola HAPC met several times in late 2023 and early 2024 to consider a range of options that could be implemented by the Local Trust Committee (LTC) in order to increase the supply of housing, and especially affordable housing, on Gabriola Island. The Islands Trust’s Housing Options Toolkit¹ was an important source of information for this exercise.

Many of the following proposals have the potential to result in increased density on specific properties. We propose to the LTC that questions around density should be considered on the basis of site-specific parameters, including water availability, septic capacity, ecosystem values, ecosystem preservation and restoration plans, and proximity to amenities, and that these parameters must be demonstrated by the proponent. Limitations to the number of residents on an existing property and on a new development should be considered on the basis of these factors rather than on familial relationships.

| Proposal | Rationale |
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| 1) We ask the LTC to request that Trust Council lobby the provincial government to extend the Speculation and Vacancy Tax ² (a.k.a. Empty Homes Tax) to the Gabriola Island Trust Area, with the hope that it might be extended to all parts of the Trust area that agree to it. | There are dozens if not hundreds of Gabriola dwellings that remain empty for most of the year. Many of these would be suitable as rental accommodations, or if the owners don’t want to pay the tax, they might be sold to someone who needs a place to live. Revenue from the tax would be transferred to an affordable housing fund for Gabriola. |
| 2) We ask the LTC to make changes to allow increased density in the Village Core ³ area, by increasing the permitted number of dwelling units on all parcels over 1 ha. | If we increase allowable density in the core area there should be less pressure to build out to maximum possible density in the more rural parts of the island. Concentration of density in the core area also reduces the need for transportation. |
| 3) We ask the LTC to increase the number of allowed residential units within commercial developments. The number of units should be proportional to the commercial floor area. | At present only 1 residential unit is allowed on each commercial property. Commercial developers have made it clear that it is not cost-effective to build residential units under that constraint. |
| 4) We ask the LTC to proactively up-zone suitable properties in the Village Core area to allow for market rate multi-family residential development with stipulation | Property owners in the Village Core may be encouraged to build multi-family housing. |

¹ <https://islandstrust.bc.ca/document/housing-options-toolkit-tools-1-10/>

² <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/taxes/speculation-vacancy-tax>

³ Defined in the Gabriola OCP as within 0.5 kilometres of the Village Core bounded by North, South, and Lockinvar Roads or within a 2 kilometre walking distance from the Village Core along public access routes only.

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| that a proportion of dwellings must be rented below market value. | |
| 5) We ask the LTC to increase options for additional residences in all parts of the island by expanding the types of properties where secondary suites and Accessory Dwelling Units are permitted. | More housing is needed on Gabriola, and this ties in with the new forgivable \$40,000 loan from the Province. |
| 6) We ask the LTC to do what is needed to make alternative dwelling units (that meet provincial and federal construction standards) possible, either on their own or in addition to a primary residence. | A tiny home (or other alternative dwelling unit) is a place to live for someone who doesn't have other viable options (or even for someone who does). It is a much better option than sleeping in a car or on someone's couch or in a tent. |
| 7) We ask the LTC to create zoning for clusters of manufactured, tiny and mobile homes that meet provincial and federal construction standards. | There is a high proportion of unhoused or inadequately housed residents on Gabriola. This problem will not be solved by ignoring it. |
| 8) We ask the LTC to create a way to allow bare-land stratification of a property that already has a dwelling. | Bare-land stratification allows for a separate ownership of a portion of a property, without increasing density, and so can facilitate and incentivize construction of an additional residence. |

February 23, 2024

Housing Advisory Planning Commission members

- Felix Addison
- Emily Carson-Apstein
- Ardith Cooper
- Steven Earle (chair)
- Jenni Gehlbach
- Angela Pounds
- Dylan Wallinger
- John Woods