



# Islands Trust Housing Strategic Action Plan

## Context

The Islands Trust Area is located within Coast Salish Territory, in the treaty lands and territories of 27 First Nations. The Islands Trust is committed to working towards building strong relationships and foundations for collaborative governance with Indigenous governing bodies.

The Islands Trust has a mandate to preserve and protect the Trust Area and its unique amenities and environment for the benefit of the residents of the Trust Area and of British Columbia in cooperation with municipalities, regional districts, improvement districts, First Nations, other persons and organizations and the government of British Columbia. The Islands Trust preserves and protects the islands in the context of many complex challenges including: climate change, lack of affordable housing, freshwater limitations, many species at risk, development and tourism pressures.

The Islands Trust Policy Statement<sup>1</sup> identifies goals and policies that guide the work of the Islands Trust. Specifically, it guides the development of official community plans (OCPs) and regulatory bylaws by local trust committees (LTCs) and island municipalities and provides specific directives to all LTCs and island municipalities in support of affordable housing policy goals.

Availability of affordable, appropriate, and adequate housing for all individuals and families is an important part of healthy communities in the Trust Area. Many communities in the Trust Area are experiencing a shortage of safe, secure, and affordable housing. More and more often, island workers are needing to commute from off-island locations, seniors are finding it challenging to age in place, and many people do not have secure housing. The Islands Trust Council has declared that a housing equity and workforce shortage crisis exists on many of the islands within the Islands Trust Area. Strengthening housing affordability is an Islands Trust Council priority.

While Islands Trust and local trust committees cannot tackle these issues alone, local trust committees can regulate use and density, ensuring new housing is located in appropriate locations, can regulate short-term rentals, and can coordinate with other levels of government to foster safe, secure, and affordable housing. Meeting the diverse housing needs of Trust Area communities requires an integrated and collaborative approach with communities, First Nations, federal, provincial, and regional governments, and non-governmental organizations.

In the spring of 2019, the Province introduced legislation requiring local governments, including LTCs, to prepare housing needs reports to better understand current and future housing needs in their communities. Local governments and LTCs must consider their most recent housing needs report when developing or amending an OCP. More recently, the Province has begun introducing new housing legislation to address short-term rentals and deliver more small-scale, multi-unit housing for people,

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<sup>1</sup> Note the Policy Statement Amendment project is underway to adapt the Policy Statement to current and future challenges and opportunities, and to reflect its commitments related to reconciliation, climate change, and affordable housing.



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including townhomes, triplexes and laneway homes, and fix outdated zoning rules to help build more homes faster. Housing needs reports will now be required to consider 5 and 20 year housing needs.

This action plan supports the Trust Council Strategic Plan. The Trust Council Strategic Plan represents the priorities of Trust Council and the Islands Trust and provides a framework to guide decision-making and allocate resources.

### Objectives of the Housing Strategic Action Plan

Through a review of information and consultation the following have been identified as key objectives for the Housing Strategic Action Plan. These objectives are intended to guide Housing Strategic Action Plan actions by providing a focus for how the Islands Trust will achieve its housing goals as described in the Policy Statement<sup>2</sup>:

*Goal: To Sustain Island Character and Healthy Communities: "...The health of a community is influenced by numerous factors such as economic security, education, social support systems, the cleanliness and safety of the environment, and the availability of such necessities as educational and social services, transportation, affordable food and housing".*

*Directive Policy: "5.8.6 Local trust committees and island municipalities shall, in their official community plans and regulatory bylaws, address their community's current and projected housing requirements and the long-term needs for educational, institutional, community and health-related facilities and services, as well as the cultural and recreational facilities and services."*

These objectives include both objectives that the Islands Trust can implement as well as objectives that require partnership and advocacy. The discussion under each objective provides more information about the objective and why it is needed, in addition to identifying some of the actions to be undertaken. The Islands Trust Housing Action List table provides a full list of actions for the Housing Strategic Actions Plan.

### Objectives Internal to the Islands Trust

#### **A) Identify and Communicate Housing Need and Activities**

Identifying housing need is the starting point for implementing policies and actions related to housing in every LTC. Housing needs assessments are a legislated requirement (every 5 years) and a critical component of understanding housing needs. The Islands Trust 2020 LTC Housing Profiles provide a snapshot of housing need. Communication identifying the unique nature of the housing crisis in island communities is critical to facilitating more focussed and specific attention to these needs by regional districts, the Province and the federal government as well as those who own property and live in the Islands Trust Area. Communications should consider each audience in the

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<sup>2</sup> <https://islandstrust.bc.ca/document/islands-trust-policy-statement-bylaw-no-17/>.



Islands Trust Area and include information about housing needs, activities being done to address need and actions individuals can take.

## **B) Develop Trust-wide consistency in housing policy and project processes**

Consistency is important in order to ensure the goals of the organization area being implemented throughout the Trust Area. In addition, it can provide efficiencies for resourcing and predictability for all people involved in housing policy and projects. Articulating a vision for housing affordability in the updated Islands Trust Policy Statement is a key element that will support consistency.

## **C) Identify Suitable Land for Additional Housing and Density Using Best Available Environmental And Social Impact Data**

Housing options related to increasing affordability may involve increasing density or redirecting growth to preferred areas. Suitable land for density increase is land that has a reliable source of potable water, is less ecologically sensitive than others and is close to community services and amenities. Data is needed to support mechanisms to identify suitable land.

## **D) Support Local Trust Committee Land-Use Policy Reviews and Updates**

Regulating land use is the primary tool the Islands Trust has to help meet housing need. OCP policies should be flexible enough to support a diversity of housing in a diversity of locations. Creative solutions may be necessary, including the development of housing for workers and volunteers in areas that are not currently zoned for such housing. Land use regulations implement OCP policies, e.g., pre-zoning land to support a specific type of housing (e.g., rental) or to increase density. Both OCP policy and subsequent land use bylaw (LUB) zoning changes must be in accordance with the Islands Trust Policy Statement. These policies can all work together to create housing solutions especially when reviewed on a regular basis.

## **E) Streamline and Support Processes for Non Profit-Led Rezoning Applications**

Because of the limited scale of development, providing multi-family affordable housing is generally the purview of not-for-profit community organizations with government support, rather than the private sector. These organizations have identified challenges with moving through the pre-development phase. A number of recent housing studies have identified steps the Islands Trust can take to support an increase in multi-family affordable housing zoning, including a need to streamline and support the processes for non-profit-led rezoning applications.

## **F) Support Housing Affordability Through Housing Agreements**

Housing agreements are the tool used to protect the affordability of different types of housing. The Islands Trust has several housing agreements for various multi-family developments.



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### Actions Requiring Partnership and Advocacy

#### **G) Collaborate with Indigenous Nations**

As discussed above, the Islands Trust Area is located within Coast Salish Territory, in the treaty lands and territories of 27 First Nations. The Islands Trust is committed to working towards building strong relationships and foundations for collaborative governance with Indigenous governing bodies including in the area of housing.

#### **H) Develop Partnerships to Improve Existing Housing and to Deliver New Housing**

The unique and multi-agency governance structure of the Islands Trust requires focussed co-ordination, particularly with regional districts to support programs that are beyond regulating land use but serve the Islands Trust mandate (e.g., education, providing infrastructure, providing subsidies for housing related supports). Such coordination has been limited to date.

#### **I) Advocate for Policy and Process Changes That Will Address Housing Challenges on the Islands**

Housing challenges on the islands are unique and require unique solutions. There are a number of external policy and process changes that would support housing needs in the Islands Trust Area that require policy change by a number of agencies.

#### **J) Advocate for Funding to Support Housing Needs on the Islands**

Addressing housing need in the Islands Trust Area requires staff resources and funding. Because of the uniqueness of the Islands Trust, it can be difficult to access some of the existing funding mechanisms available to other local governments.

## Islands Trust Housing Strategic Action Plan - Action List

The Islands Trust Housing Action List table provides the full list of Housing Strategy actions under each of these objectives.

Colour Legend: Internal to Islands Trust Advocacy and Partnerships

ACTION		TIMING <sup>3,4</sup>	COMMENTS
<b>Objective A) Identify and Communicate Housing Need and Activities</b>			
1	Updates to Housing Profiles for all LTCs when new data available from: -Census (release Feb 2026, 2030, etc.) -Housing Needs Reports (every 5 yrs, 2024, 2029, etc.)	Q3 of 24/25 Ongoing	Housing Profiles for each LTC created as part of Housing Options Toolkit Part 1 and provide snapshot of housing need. Housing Needs Reports Completed
2	Updates to Housing Needs Reports every 5 years (2024, 2029 etc)	Q1 of 24/25 Completed	Reports completed April 2025
3	Improve the Housing Affordability webpage to facilitate easy access to the housing toolkit tools and LTC project work and support awareness of housing affordability advocacy	Q3 of 23/24 Completed	Webpage updated
4	Communicate to property owners what housing actions (e.g., secondary suites etc.) can be taken under existing bylaws and constraints that are beyond an LTC's authority to address, e.g. Building Code	Q4 of 23/24 Completed	Communications material completed
<b>Objective B) Develop Trust-Wide Consistency in Housing Policy and Project Processes</b>			
5	Islands Trust Policy Statement amendments to provide affordable housing vision	Q3 of 26/27	As part of the Policy Statement amendment project, which is underway, anticipated to be completed in late 2026.
6	Trust Council to prioritize funding business cases resulting in meeting Housing Strategic Action Plan goals especially those that result in effective and/or innovative bylaws increasing housing options (OCP and LUBs) and updates to older zoning provisions	Q4 of 24/25 Completed	Funding for LTC projects have been provided by Trust Council.
7	Draft consistent definitions of affordable housing and other housing-related terms.	Q4 of 23/24 Completed	. Standard definitions completed, being incorporated in new and updated LUBs

<sup>3</sup> If "ongoing" is indicated then this is action that is intended to be repeated at the appropriate time interval. If a date is identified that is the planned for end date of the first action.

<sup>4</sup> Note: Q1 =Apr-Jun; Q2=July-Sept; Q3=Oct-Dec; Q4=Mar-May

ACTION		TIMING <sup>3,4</sup>	COMMENTS
8	Create Housing Toolkit for Planners and LTCs to include recommended process for LTC housing projects and list of land use planning options to address housing need	Completed	Part 1 of Housing Options Toolkit work completed, additional new actions to create "Part 2" Tools 11-16 included as part of this table
9	Create a model engagement framework for LTCs that will educate and effectively engage communities in affordable housing discussions	Q3 of 24/25 Completed	Framework document completed
<b>Objective C) Identify Suitable Land for Additional Housing and Density Using Best Available Environmental And Social Impact Data</b>			
10	Undertake suitable land (for development) analysis using existing evidence-based mapping data	Q4 24/25 On-going	Draft completed and presented to LTCs with on-going major projects. Revisions and updated on-going
11	Incorporate new data on social and economic implications of housing location into suitable land analysis	Q4 23/24 Q4 24/25	Apply for and secure funding Pilot approach
12	Undertake work with First Nations to identify and incorporate indigenous interests into suitable land analysis	Q4 23/24 Q4 24/25	Apply for and secure funding Pilot approach
<b>Objective D) Support Local Trust Committee Land-Use Policy Review and Update</b>			
13	Encourage (through communications from staff) LTCs to update OCPs to facilitate the development of housing to address housing needs, could include development of policies that will encourage and facilitate land donation to regional districts or non-profits	Q2 24/25 Completed	Part 1 of Housing Options Toolkit work completed to support this work. Several LTCs are undertaking Housing Projects, however up to LTCs to prioritize
14	Encourage LTCs (through communications from staff) to create opportunities through zoning for housing forms that address housing needs	Q2 24/25 Completed	Part 1 of Housing Options Toolkit work completed to support this work. Several LTCs are undertaking Housing Projects, however up to LTCs to prioritize
<b>Objective E) Streamline and Support Processes for Non Profit-Led Rezoning Applications</b>			
15	Develop communications materials on pre-development steps and costs for community organizations and affordable housing application process (Tools 11, 12)	Q4 24/25	Part 2 of Housing Options Toolkit action. Identified by several Island Housing groups as a priority.
16	Resource a technical services fund (available to LTCs) to commission professional reports for site-specific affordable housing projects or a granting function to support pre-development costs for affordable housing where a non-profit has made an application	Q4 25/26	A potential future business case, however applications are inconsistent in terms of timing.
17	Convene pre-development meetings to assess feasibility for all proposed multi-family re-zoning applications	Completed	This guidance has been incorporated into the Housing Options Toolkit Part 1. This should be a practice for any significant application

ACTION		TIMING <sup>3,4</sup>	COMMENTS
18	Terms of Reference and Water Management Plan Template including proof of water guidance (Tools 14-16)	Q4 24/25	Part 2 of Toolkit action. Identified by several Island Housing groups as a priority.
<b>Objective F) Housing Affordability Through Housing Agreements and Land Acquisition</b>			
19	Adopt revised Housing Agreement template for multi-family developments	Q4 25/26	Part 2 of Toolkit action (Tool 13). Identified by several Island Housing groups as a second-tier priority.
20	Co-ordinate with Regional Districts (RDs) to develop a simple program to administer housing agreements	Q4 25/26	RDs would need to have a funded service.
21	Trust Council to identify if there are specific circumstances where they want to hold land for housing in a manner consistent with its mandate	Q1 24/25	Trust Council and RDs can hold land. Legislative amendment may be required.
<b>Objective G) Collaborate with Indigenous Nations</b>			
22	Work with Indigenous Nations to address their interests	Q4 23/24 Ongoing	Begin conversations in Q4 of 23/24
<b>Objective H) Develop Partnerships to Improve Existing and Deliver New Housing</b>			
23	Establish regional interagency cooperation such as round tables to coordinate servicing and zoning requirements, and remove funding and legislative barriers, in support of the development of affordable housing	Q3 24/25 Q2 25/26	First roundtable proposed to be staff focused with IT staff, RD staff and NGOs, and some housing leaders Second roundtable proposed to build off work of first roundtable and be for elected officials.
24	Work with Regional Districts to facilitate the development and implementation of affordable housing strategies for the islands	Q4 23/24 Ongoing	First step would be to reach out to regional districts to understand their planning workplan and timelines. CRD has a Southern Gulf Island strategy
<b>Objective I) Advocate for Policy Changes That Will Address Housing Challenges On the Islands</b>			
25	Advocate to Island Health to develop support and guidance for unplumbed sewage disposal such as composting toilets and alternative water solutions such as graywater recycling and rainwater catchment	Q3 24/25	In accordance with Islands Trust advocacy policies. May extend beyond Island Health if provincial regulations are the obstacle.
26	Advocate to Province for changes at the Provincial and regional level to support tiny homes on wheels	Q1 24/25	THoWs report presented at AVICC, resolution endorsed
27	Advocate to Province to enable improvement districts to access infrastructure grants	Q3 23/24 Completed	Report RPC, placed in abeyance
<b>Objective J) Advocate for Funding to Support Housing Needs on the Islands</b>			
28	Advocate for the provincial government to fund growth-limits assessment like groundwater availability studies to support “preserve and protect” mandate.	Q4 24/25	In accordance with Islands Trust advocacy policies, potential actions include letter writing, UBCM resolutions.

ACTION		TIMING <sup>3,4</sup>	COMMENTS
29	Advocate for BC Housing and CMHC to incorporate a low density, rural framework within capital funding programs	Q2 24/25	In accordance with Islands Trust advocacy policies, potential actions include letter writing, UBCM resolutions.
30	Advocate for ongoing provincial funding to help address housing need in the Islands Trust (e.g. staff capacity, funding to build housing and supports like septic and water catchment systems, housing authority (explore use of Municipal and Regional District Tax from vacation rentals)	Q4 24/25	In accordance with Islands Trust advocacy policies, potential actions include letter writing, UBCM resolutions.
<b>General</b>			
31	Monitor regulatory changes on a regular basis and make updates to this plan as necessary	Q4 23/24 Completed	Review of provincial regulations as released in spring 2024. Memo distributed to LTCs.