



Islands Trust Official Community Plan Climate Change Policy Options

Planning Tools

The following land use planning tools can be used by Local Trust Committees (LTCs) through Official Community Plan (OCP) policies.

Zoning

Zoning regulations determine where specific types of development occur, as well as building size, setback, and height. An LTC can adjust zoning bylaws to eliminate disincentives and encourage energy efficient building construction and retrofits in a number of ways. For example, an LTC can:

- Exclude features designed to increase energy efficiency from calculation of Floor Area Ratio (FAR)
- Reduce or eliminate building setbacks to encourage construction of thicker walls
- Exclude renewable energy equipment from height calculations
- Permit small-scale renewable energy equipment in setback area
- Make zoning approval subject to site specific requirements related to GHG emissions

Variance¹

A tool used to provide a one-time exemption to an established zoning rule or standard.

Development Permit Areas (DPAs)*

A development permit area (DPA) is an area identified in an OCP within which all subdivisions, new construction, and building additions or alterations require a development permit. In order to receive a permit, developers must conform to a set of development requirements determined by an LTC. Bill 27 allows local governments to establish DPAs specifically intended to reduce GHG emissions and promote energy and water efficiency. Permit requirements within these DPAs may include stipulations around site landscaping (e.g. natural shading, insulation, and wind-breaks to reduce building energy consumption), siting of buildings, exterior form and design of buildings, equipment and systems external to buildings and other structures, and restrictions on type and placement of trees and vegetation. Requirements such as parking stalls for small electric vehicles and plug-ins can also be required through DPA guidelines. DPAs address land use and exterior building design only, and cannot influence construction standards and interior building design.

Parking Requirements*

LTCs have bylaw authority to determine the amount, size, design, surfacing of off-street parking required by a building. Bill 27 expanded parking requirement authority: LTCs can now reduce off-street parking requirements for development that is in proximity to alternative transportation services, and can also require developers to provide cash in lieu of required off-street parking for development of walk ways, bicycle paths, public transit and other alternative transportation infrastructure.

Density Bonuses

Established through zoning bylaw, a density bonus allows developers to surpass the allowable density (measured in FAR) in exchange for the provision of community amenities. A community amenity is broadly defined as features that a LTC considers of value to its residents. Amenities related to GHG mitigation include: energy efficient and green building design, use of an alternative energy system, public walking and bicycle trails, tree preservation, and ecosystem restoration. Amenities can be provided on-site or off-site.

Density Transfer

Density transfer is tool that allows the voluntary transfer of the development potential of one property (the 'sending property') to another property (the 'receiving property'). Density transfer can be used to help an LTC

¹ Bill 27 expands local government authority to allow more effective use of this tool to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

gradually move towards a sustainable development pattern and low-GHG build-out plan (e.g. concentrating future development in nodes to increase density, reduce transportation needs, and preserve forested lands). 'Sending' and 'receiving' areas are identified in an OCP, and density transfers are carefully considered on a one-by-one basis.

Design Guidelines

Design guidelines are a set of land use principles established by an LTC to help shape development in a specific area. If desired by an LTC, design guidelines can include an emphasis on energy efficient and low GHG development. While such guidelines are not binding on developers, they can be an effective tool – particularly when designed to complement and expand on zoning requirements.

Comprehensive Development Zones

Comprehensive Development zones (CD zones) are OCP-identified zones in which an LTC can establish guidelines and requirements for all aspects of development in a coordinated and integrated way. This tool can be used to mitigate GHG emissions in a number of ways – for example, CD zones:

- Allow an LTC to establish specific and detailed zoning requirements that support sustainable land use patterns
- Create opportunity for a LTC to extract commitments for community amenities such as tree retention, green infrastructure, and energy efficient buildings from a developer
- Allow an LTC to cluster development in one area of the development zone to minimize site disturbance and create compact land form

Run-Off Control Requirements

LTCs can establish a bylaw to reduce the percentage of land that can be covered by impermeable material, and manage and provide for ongoing disposal of surface runoff and stormwater.

Development Cost Charges (DCCs)

While LTCs do not directly control DCCs, they can encourage regional districts to execute this new DCC authority. Development Cost Charges (DCCs) are one-time charges levied on new subdivision and buildings to cover the cost of off-site infrastructure required to service the new development. Bill 27 allows local governments to waive or reduce DCCs for small-lot subdivisions and construction that advances low-GHG development patterns.

Tax Revitalization Exemptions

Property value tax exemptions are available only to municipalities and not to other communities within the Islands Trust Area. Exemptions can be awarded to properties within a specified area that meet bylaw-established criteria for property improvement upgrades. Revitalization exemptions can be strategically used to promote investment in 'green' building designs and energy-efficiency improvements.

Advocacy and Partnerships

While not planning tools per se, advocacy initiatives and partnerships can be effective OCP policies that play an important role in reducing GHG emissions associated with land use.