



1 - 500 Lower Ganges Road Salt Spring Island BC V8K 2N8
Telephone **250.537.9144**

Toll Free via Enquiry BC in Vancouver 604.660-2421. Elsewhere in BC **1.800.663.7867**

Email ssiinfo@islandstrust.bc.ca

Web www.islandstrust.bc.ca

Salt Spring Island Local Trust Committee Policy Statement, Adopted by SSI LTC on 10 May 2018

The Salt Spring Island community has been very clear: we face a housing crisis on Salt Spring.

It is a crisis that the Salt Spring Island Local Trust Committee (SSI LTC) is keenly aware of. The chronic shortage of affordable housing impacts all us, directly or indirectly.

The SSI LTC want to thank community members who've expressed concern about the state of affordable housing and who continue to work towards solutions for this challenging problem. We hear you and will continue to seek community input for the decisions we make to address affordable housing.

For our part, the SSI LTC has taken a three-pronged approach to tackle the issue:

1. In terms of land-use planning measures, the SSI LTC has:
 - Implemented, and subsequently expanded, a secondary suites pilot area;
 - Drafted temporary use permit changes to allow consideration of alternative housing solutions; and
 - Directed staff to draft a land-use bylaw amendment to consider increasing the permitted sizes and lawful year round use of cottages in certain areas and to further expand the use of secondary suites.

2. In terms of processing applications, the SSI LTC is:
 - Processing numerous development affordable housing applications including "SS Commons", "Dragonfly Commons", "Croftonbrook", "CRD Drake Road", and more;
 - Working with other agencies to assess impacts and to seek solutions for projects that may be facing particular challenges, for example access to fresh water.

3. In terms of enforcement, the SSI LTC has:
 - Instructed bylaw officers to begin proactive enforcement against illegal short-term vacation rentals (STVRs).

Enforced unlawful housing issues according to a robust consideration of issues as evidenced in the SSI LTC's standing resolution that has instructed bylaw officers to prioritize enforcement of unlawful housing on lots with more than one unlawful dwelling and for units deemed to have serious health, safety, or environmental issues or impacts.

On an Islands Trust-wide level, the Trust Council has been working on an affordable housing program that includes updated housing needs assessments, toolkits, review of housing agreements, and new housing agreement templates.

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There are, of course, limits to what the SSI LTC can do. It cannot buy property and/or develop it. We must rely on other agencies or private land owners to come forward with appropriate housing solutions.

Crucially, the SSI LTC cannot support the unlawful proliferation of substandard housing and that is why we have taken the measures outlined above under enforcement. Unlawful housing represents a host of potential negative impacts for the wider community, including septic overflow, harmful disruption to the environment, blocking emergency services access, and can also present safety concerns for community members who live in the substandard housing. It is worth noting that the standards that define acceptable housing on Salt Spring have been established through rigorous community consultation processes for both land and building use. It is the product of a community-based process.

In addition, we are aware that aspects of the environment on Salt Spring are now in a fragile state and we must not exceed the limits of the natural resources required to sustain us. When considering the development of new housing, the SSI LTC is obliged to consider the ability of our natural environment to sustain that housing at a healthy and reasonable level, not just for the present but also into the future.

We appreciate that individuals can often feel powerless in the face of such complex challenges. There are things that members of the public can do:

- Continue to be engaged in the issue, advocate for your beliefs;
- Work with/donate to local non-profit groups or local agencies to help advance development of housing units.

We are always open to hearing your suggestions. If you have an idea for how to tackle the housing shortage in our community, please talk to an elected official or planner and get it written down for consideration.

SSI LTC look forward to working with the public as we continue to advance the Islands Trust's preserve and protect mandate while at the same time working towards supporting sufficient, safe, and affordable housing for our entire community.