



## **Engagement Strategy – DRAFT February 2020**

*The purpose of this engagement strategy is to answer the question “What do we need to do to make this project successful?”. This document is intended to assist the Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee (LTC), planning staff at the Islands Trust and the Gabriola Housing Advisory Planning Commission (HAPC) with identifying engagement approaches, topics for discussion and measures to evaluate the success of the Housing Options and Impacts Review Project.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Project Description**

In early 2019 the Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee (LTC) committed to a multi-year land use planning review project on Gabriola Island called the ‘Housing Options and Impacts Review Project’. The goal of this project is to develop new policies and regulations that will promote an increase in housing options on Gabriola Island, coupled with a high level of protection of the island’s groundwater supply, remaining biodiversity and sensitive ecosystems. Ideally, affordable, appropriate, and adequate housing should be available for Gabriola residents of all abilities, incomes, lifestyles and household sizes. The parameters for this housing initiative include the Islands Trust commitment to preserve and protect the unique and fragile environment of the island communities; address the [climate emergency](#) (passed March 2019); address First Nations core concerns and accordance with the [Reconciliation Declaration](#) (passed March 2019) and the [Reconciliation Action Plan 2019-2022](#) (passed June 2019).

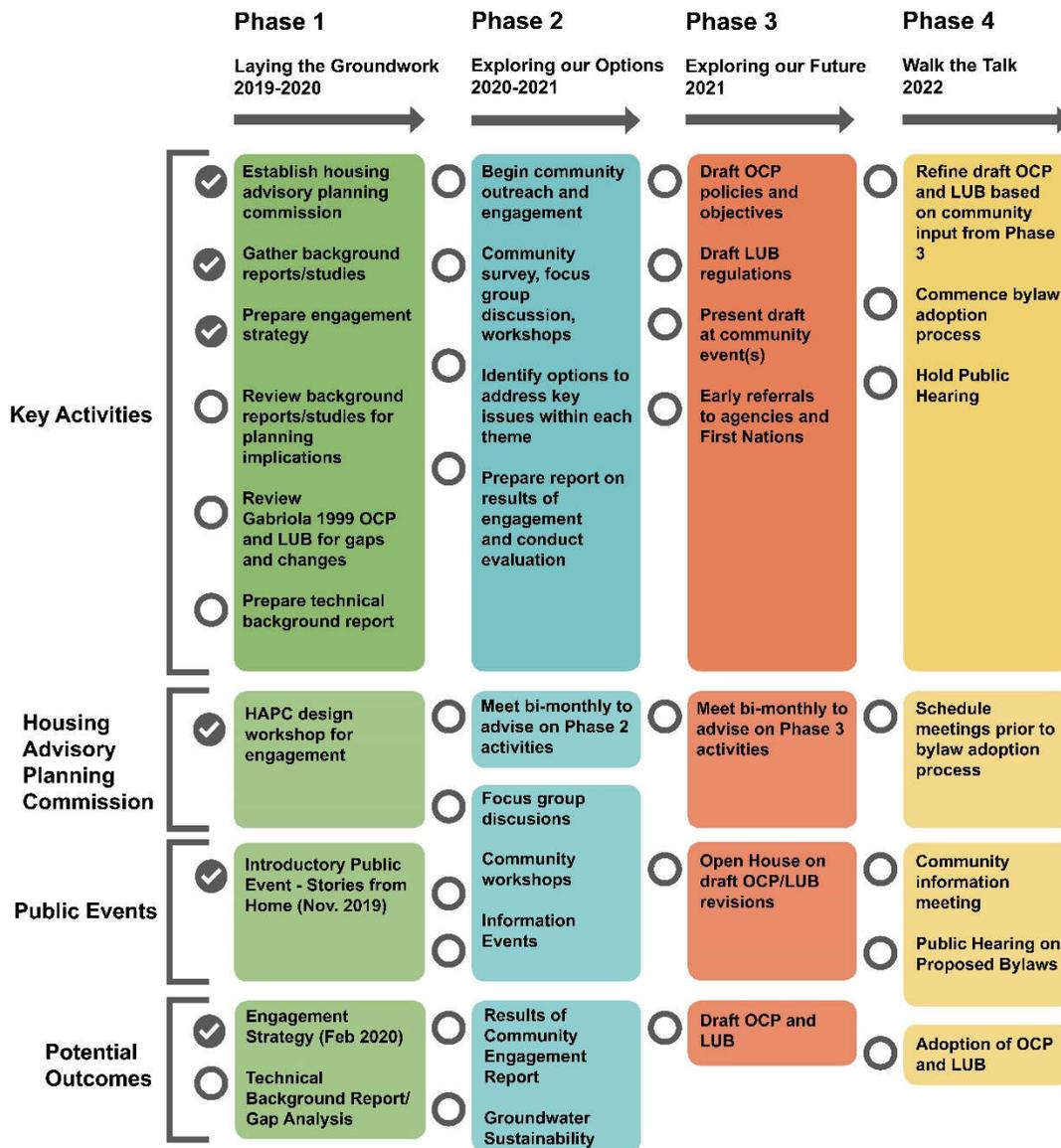
This project builds on work by community groups and local governments over the last two decades, attempting to promote a greater diversity of housing options to meet the needs of residents, while protecting the island’s natural environment and cultural heritage. An extensive compendium of housing related documents and knowledge will continue to be reviewed as part of this project, including the Gabriola Wellness Collaborative Family Action Plan, Gabriola Island Chamber of Commerce Strategic Plan and Village Vision Project Final Summary Report.

### **ROLE OF THE HAPC**

The Housing Advisory Planning Commission (HAPC) is a commission of 8 community volunteers, appointed by the LTC to assist with this project. The HAPC will have a hands-on role in creating and implementing engagement activities in the community under the direction of the LTC and coordinated by Islands Trust staff. This will include facilitating discussions and hosting community events. The HAPC will review summary documents from the engagement sessions prepared by Islands Trust staff, and provide the LTC with recommendations on options and potential next steps. The HAPC may request that the LTC consider access to Advisory Planning Commission (APC) membership for focus groups and test engagement sessions.



**Gabriola Housing Options and Impacts Review  
Project Timeline: 2019-2022**





## Gabriola Housing Options and Impacts Review Project

### Key Activities

The project would be implemented in four key phases over the next four years. The first phase, “**Laying the Groundwork**”, will establish a foundation of critical technical information on four main themes and ensure ample community dialogue and discussion. The second phase, “**Exploring our Options**” is intended to support a series of comprehensive community and stakeholder engagement opportunities over the course of a year, evaluating specific options to address housing affordability, protection of the natural environment, cultural heritage, and an increase in housing diversity. The third phase, “**Exploring our Future**”, will translate the identified options from Phase two, into concrete policy or regulatory tools that could be included in the Gabriola Island [Official Community Plan](#) and [Land Use Bylaw](#). The final phase, “**Walk the Talk**” includes the formal bylaw amendment and review process, which would result in the adoption of new policies and regulations in support of the four project themes.

The tangible deliverables of this project will be:

- updated or new Official Community Plan policies addressing diversity of housing options, off-reserve indigenous housing needs, protection of the natural environmental and groundwater resources;
- updated or new Land Use Bylaw regulations that regulate land use, subdivision, density, siting, setbacks, landscaping and height on Gabriola Island;
- Background reports that supply technical information and analysis, in response to issues and concerns brought forward from the community during the public engagement activities;
- Increased awareness and clarity on how the private, not-for-profit or government sectors can develop housing options and/or deliver housing support services or on the Island;
- A groundwater sustainability strategy that helps identify recharge areas that should be protected from development, aquifer vulnerability, relevant climate change scenarios and low risk development areas on the island.

## VALUES AND PRINCIPLES FOR ENGAGEMENT

Values and principles are fundamental norms or rules that guide the perspective of an organized group of people, as well as their actions. The Engagement Strategy is built upon the following Guiding Principles of the Islands Trust:

- The primary responsibility of the Islands Trust Council is to provide leadership for the preservation, protection and stewardship of the amenities, environment and resources of the Trust Area.
- When making decisions and exercising judgment, Trust Council will place priority on preserving and protecting the integrity of the environment and amenities in the Trust Area.
- Trust Council will seek information from a broad range of sources in its decision-making processes, recognizing the importance of local and traditional knowledge in this regard.
- Trust Council believes that to achieve the Islands Trust object, the rate and scale of growth and development in the Trust Area must be carefully managed and may require limitation.
- Trust Council believes that open, consultative public participation is vital to effective decision making for the Trust Area.



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The Engagement Strategy places a high value on:

### Inclusion

The strategy seeks to ensure that every voice can be heard in an authentic way, and to create opportunities for people to contribute when, where and how they feel most heard. As a key element of this, the strategy acknowledges the priority interest of First Nations in this and all processes. The [First Nations Engagement Principles](#) of the Islands Trust shall apply.

### Respect

The strategy seeks to ensure that every voice is treated equitably, and the feelings, rights and traditions of others are honoured through the engagement process. Input from the engagement will be wholly and broadly considered.

### Community Voice

The Strategy will result in an engagement process that shares relevant and accurate information in order to increase the self determination of the community so they can better express their diverse interests, needs and perspectives in the housing project.

### Innovation

The options and mechanisms for engagement will provide a range of ways for citizens and stakeholders to effectively participate in this project. Likewise, the strategy encourages innovation from participants as it seeks input around the identified issues, and encourages new approaches in how housing issues may be considered on Gabriola.

### Wholly and Equitably Informed

The strategy seeks to ensure that anyone and everyone has access to relevant information on the issues related to this project and around the engagement process itself. Importantly, the strategy will ensure relevant information is available in a variety of ways and through multiple sources.

### Engagement as an Ongoing Process

This strategy, developed to meet the specific needs of the Housing Options and Impact Review process, will also provide a foundation for ongoing and future engagement on Gabriola on issues that the Local Trust Committee considers.

## PRIORITY ENGAGEMENT THEMES

The priority of the Housing Options and Impacts Review Project is to address the housing crisis on Gabriola Island through the development of policies and regulations that will promote an increase in housing options. These policies and regulations must also be developed within the context of the Trust's 'preserve and protect' mandate, the need for careful stewardship of water resources, and the climate emergency as outlined in the following Priority Engagement Themes:



## Gabriola Housing Options and Impacts Review Project

### 1. Housing Diversity and Affordability

The population of Gabriola has increased and diversified over time, in almost every demographic indicator – age, gender identity, community of origin, and economic stability. At the same time, various factors have combined to limit or reduce the inventory of housing options that are suitable to meet current needs. Future forecasts suggest that the current condition will only be exacerbated unless changes are made to increase the diversity of options and, in some cases, amount of housing available. Increasing the diversity of housing options, especially secure and affordable rental housing, is a central theme to this project.

### 2. People at Risk

The most vulnerable people in our community are often the most impacted by the lack of appropriate housing options. We know that the number of under-housed and homeless is significant, and that those people are most at risk because of lack of appropriate housing. Many are already dealing with physical and mental health and substance use issues that may preclude them from securing safe and appropriate housing. These are the people in our community who may benefit most from secure housing, but are least able to find and retain it. The number of people in our community at risk is growing, and the impact to Gabriola is borne by all residents. Ensuring the entire spectrum of housing (from emergency housing to market ownership) is represented on Gabriola Island is a central theme to this project.

### 3. Environment and Cultural Heritage

The project will evaluate potential impacts of increased housing options to Gabriola's natural environment as well as cultural sites and archaeological resources. Land use decisions will be informed by First Nations core concerns and knowledge and be reflective of preserving and protecting Indigenous cultural heritage and sacred sites.

#### A. Climate Emergency

The Islands Trust Council has joined thousands of governments around the world declaring a climate emergency with a goal to “pursue an absolute reduction in greenhouse gas emissions in this very special area”. Accordingly, every Islands Trust project must be carried out with a view to minimizing the project's impacts on the climate. In the context of housing, this may require that any new construction demonstrate the highest standards of energy efficiency and water conservation.

#### B. Protecting Aquifers

For all the islands in the Salish Sea, including Gabriola Island, the impacts of a changing climate mean serious threats to our already limited aquifers. Recent groundwater studies for Gabriola Island suggest that some areas of the island have already exceeded the capacity of the aquifers and critical recharge areas are being developed instead of being left in a natural state. Rainwater harvesting and grey water re-use should be used to the full extent possible under regulations existing at the time of construction.

#### C. Protecting Biodiversity

The United Nations Convention of Biological Diversity (AICHI) set targets of 17% of terrestrial areas to be protected by 2020. This figure has not been achieved by the Gabriola Island Local Trust Area, as less than 13% of terrestrial areas have been protected to date. Protection of



## Gabriola Housing Options and Impacts Review Project

biodiversity in the Gabriola Trust Area will require much higher levels of land conservation and more robust land use planning tools to minimize loss of species and to be able to allow for resilience of ecosystems to threats like climate change.

### PURPOSE OF ENGAGEMENT

The primary reason for public engagement is to **inform** the LTC's decisions to amend the Gabriola Official Community Plan and/or Land Use Bylaw. In order to make an informed decision, the LTC is committed to **consulting** with the community to build relationships in the community and **involving** the stakeholders in order to building the capacity of our community to understand the decision(s).

### THE ENGAGEMENT QUESTION

The engagement question is important for motivating widespread participation in the engagement process. The following question includes specific language of at-risk communities and aligns it with the priority engagement themes:

***“How might we amend Gabriola’s OCP policies and/or LUB regulations to fulfil our obligations to our community and the unique natural ecology in which we all live, by allowing a range of affordable, accessible housing options in accordance with water and climate change imperatives set by Islands Trust?”***

### THE ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

See Attachment 1. Table which outlines:

1. Which phases of the project will rely on INFORM, CONSULT or INVOLVE engagement styles;
2. What activities and methods will be used to engage the community; and
3. What information and resources are required to support understanding and authentic participation in the engagement.

### EVALUATION OF THE ENGAGEMENT

The strategy proposes an evaluation framework (DRAFT TO BE DEVELOPED) that considers the breadth and depth of engagement from both objective and subjective perspectives. At a high level, the evaluation process should include:



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1. Evaluation sessions to examine, diagnose, discuss, and dialogue the cause-and-effect links and assumptions regarding the engagement process, outcomes, and intended and unintended consequences and impacts;
2. A plan to organize and allocate resources for total evidence-based evaluation of the engagement process (who was engaged, how many, number of responses, depth and quality of responses);
3. Incorporation of lessons learned to be included in future engagements;
4. Development of an ongoing engagement strategy to support current and future LTC processes and projects.

Ensuring the validity of the engagement process will be critical in supporting the decision making process. Likewise, understanding how effective the engagement strategy has been, including the approach and tools used, will provide vital information to support ongoing engagement on Gabriola around housing and other issues.

# HOUSING OPTIONS AND IMPACTS REVIEW PROJECT – ENGAGEMENT PLAN 2020-2021

Project Phase	Purpose of Engagement	Technique	Description	Resources Required	Estimated Budget
1 Laying the Groundwork 2020	INFORM <i>Here's what is happening...</i>	Project Website	General updates, photos, videos, resources and relevant project contacts	-planner staff time to manage -communications specialist content edits	ON HOLD- LAUNCH JUNE 2020 No cost to LTC
		Social Media	Time sensitive updates, event promotion, polls	-planner staff time to manage -communications specialist review	ON HOLD – may require consultant time
		Newspaper Articles/Inserts	Advertising, press releases, submissions	-planner staff time -communications specialist review	\$1000
		Open Houses/pop-up booth	Organize a booth or table in a busy public location. Provide simple and fun ways for people to learn about the project and solicit input about their concerns. Share how they can follow up, participate or provide feedback.	-planner staff time -HAPC participation	\$500
2 Exploring our Options 2020	INVOLVE <i>Here's a problem, what ideas do you have?</i>	Small Group Circle Dialogue	Meet participants where they are at and generate ideas to strengthen the OCP and LUB in the three theme areas. Conduct 4-8 sessions with a diverse range of participants.	-professional facilitation -planner staff time -HAPC participation -stakeholder participation	\$500 EACH x 4? = \$2,000
		Kitchen Table Talks/Plan in a Box	Small (5-8 people) informal meeting in someone's home or café. Participants work through a series of prepared questions to generate ideas. Voucher for ~\$50 towards food to incentivize groups' participation and submission of ideas.	-planner staff time -HAPC participation -8-10 community volunteers to host -APC participation	\$2,500
2 Exploring our Options 2020-21	CONSULT <i>Here are some options, what do you think?</i>	Online Polling	Online polling allows visitors to vote on choices and track responses.	-planner staff time -HAPC participation	\$500
		Surveys	Structured form or questionnaire distributed to residents/property owners. Gain feedback and opinions on options. Web based, paper or in-person interviews.	-professional survey development -planner staff time -communication specialist review -HAPC participation	\$1000
2 Exploring our Options 2020-21		Focus Groups	Facilitated small group (6-10 people) discussions on options and concerns.	-professional facilitation -planner staff time -HAPC/APC participation	\$500 each x 4 = \$2,000



## ADDENDUM

### CORNERSTONE COMMUNICATION

The purpose of this addendum is to summarize critical information that is pertinent to the examination of housing options and impacts on Gabriola Island.

#### *Why a Housing Review? Why Now?*

The discussion around current and future housing issues on Gabriola has been ongoing for decades on the Island, and the Local Trust Committee has worked hard to balance the values of the Islands Trust and the changing interests and needs of island residents, all within the framework of the Official Community Plan and Land Use Bylaws. Previous consultations have resulted in recommendations and subsequent bylaw changes to address specific issues around housing, but the broader issue hasn't been addressed in a cohesive way.

The population of the island has continually changed, as has its economic profile. Reasonable forecasts suggest that greater change and potential growth is forthcoming, and our current state is being described as critical from more than one perspective. The environmental impact of humans in the world around us as well as here on Gabriola is becoming more clearly understood. The need to understand and address First Nations' interests and priorities has become part of planning processes to ensure that reconciliation is being addressed. There are seniors who are no longer able to stay in the houses they retired to who don't want to leave the island and community. There are families who can't find or afford a place to safely live and raise their children. Businesses who see the opportunity to grow and prosper, to create a sustainable Gabriola-based economy, are hindered or even halted by the inability to find employees because there is no affordable housing. Finally, our most vulnerable are at increased risk because the housing they find is unsafe and inadequate, if they can find housing at all.

These concerns lead to a clearly understood need for change, and a commitment from the Local Trust Committee to make changes that begin to address those issues – but only once they hear and understand how the community thinks and feels about them. The Local Trust Committee and the HAPC are working to provide you with many opportunities, and asking you for your time and thought to support them as they make the decisions that will shape how we live on Gabriola, now and in the foreseeable future.



History of Housing Work Done to Date

## A Brief History of Affordable Housing on Gabriola

1980s	1990s	2000s	2010s	2018-19
 <p><b>Seniors Village</b></p> <p>First rezoning application to the LTC for a 'seniors and special needs' housing project. Proposal was elaborate with shared amenities and green space. New zoning set a density limit of 28 units. What was constructed was very different than what was proposed with 14 duplex buildings, some strata owned, remaining rentals. No requirements for affordability or preservation of rental units.</p>	 <p><b>Gabriola Gardens</b></p> <p>First rezoning application to the LTC for a seniors affordable housing development. Proposal for 36 rent controlled units. What was permitted was 24 units and as a result of a housing downturn the proposal was converted to market strata. Housing agreement requiring affordable housing was never registered on title so no requirement for units to be affordable or maintained as rentals.</p>	 <p><b>Planning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• June 2007 Gabriola Housing Solutions Forum was held</li> <li>• May 2009 Sustainable Gabriola group formed and identified housing as critical issue</li> <li>• Nov 2009 LTC commissioned 'Gabriola Affordable Housing Needs Assessment'</li> </ul>	 <p><b>Research</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2010 Islands Trust "Community Housing Toolkit" published</li> <li>• 2011 OCP amended to include a new density bank and increases in density only for affordable housing for seniors or special needs</li> <li>• 2012 PHC report "Affordable Housing Strategy for Gabriola Island"</li> <li>• 2016 Islands Trust "Baseline Report on Affordable Housing in the Islands Trust"</li> <li>• 2016 secondary suite regulations updated.</li> </ul>	 <p><b>Next Steps</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2018 Islands Trust "Housing Needs Assessment for the Northern Region" published</li> <li>• 2018 Gabriola Housing Society hosts an Affordable Housing Forum, in 2019 is registered as a charitable organization.</li> <li>• 2019 LTC launches a multi year 'Housing Options and Impacts Review Project' to update the OCP and LUB.</li> </ul>

**Critical Issues to Consider**

How humans are housed, on Gabriola as elsewhere, has tremendous impact on the local environment, the community and, often, the world beyond. To better understand this, the current state is being considered from the perspective of the following key themes.

- a. Housing Diversity and Affordability
- b. People at Risk
- c. Environment and Cultural Heritage (Climate Emergency, Protecting Aquifers and Protecting Biodiversity)

**Why Should You Engage in this Project?**

The Housing Impact and Options Review Process will culminate in a set of recommendations for the Local Trust Committee to consider. These recommendations may include proposed policy and regulatory changes that impact the way current properties can be utilized and developed in the future. They may include changes to construction standards, and land use regulations on the Island. The intended impact



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will be defined in part by the engagement process, as will the recommendations. As a resident, property and or/business owner on Gabriola, you will likely feel the impact of these proposed changes.

The issues around housing on Gabriola are deep and complex. The LTC is committed to making changes to policy and regulations that strive to address those issues, in alignment with its broad principles and values and with the understanding, input and support of the community. Everyone who has a stake in this conversation has the right and opportunity to be involved. If you participate, your voice will be recognized and taken into account.