



GABRIOLA OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN (OCP) POLICIES GOVERNING HOUSING

This page provides information on the major policies and planning tools in the Gabriola Official Community Plan (OCP) that govern housing options on Gabriola. It covers the following:

1. definitions of affordability and attainability
2. parameters to guide the consideration of affordable housing proposals
3. housing standards
4. types of housing
5. planning tools to address need and diversity, and,
6. regulatory requirements for different types of housing.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

The development of affordable housing on Gabriola is governed by a complex set of policies and bylaws. The Gabriola Official Community Plan governs land use decisions, while decisions about the types of housing are regulated by other authorities. The Gabriola Official Community Plan includes policies governing affordable housing proposals and secondary suites but there is no comprehensive strategy to address a full range of housing options.

WHAT DOES THE GABRIOLA OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN (1997) SAY ABOUT “HOUSING AFFORDABILITY” OR “ATTAINABILITY”?

Affordability is addressed in the OCP through policy that supports an increase in residential density on the island, without subdivision, and only when it is specifically for affordable housing for special needs residents and seniors (Section 2.k).

The OCP contains a general residential policy to support a mix of housing types which includes:

1. affordable and market housing in appropriate locations. (Section 2.1(5))
2. "multiple-dwelling affordable housing" is defined as three or more residential dwelling units on a parcel restricted to affordable housing as defined by this Plan and governed by a housing agreement.
3. "Multi-dwelling residential use" is intended to be reserved for affordable housing units only which includes the following categories:
 - Special Needs residents living with physical and / or mental disabilities;
 - Seniors 60 years of age or older; and
 - Low-income families.

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Affordable housing is defined in the OCP to mean housing that costs no more than 30% of a household's gross income applied to those households with incomes at or below 60% of the median household income for Gabriola Island (using Canada Census information). The OCP states that affordable housing should be in a location which is accessible to appropriate services and acceptable to the overall community without compromising protection of the natural environment and while minimizing greenhouse gas emissions.

Densities for the creation of Multi-dwelling Affordable Housing for low-income families are to come *only from banked densities* as noted in Appendix 2 (Density Bank) of the Plan.

Multi-dwelling Affordable Housing developments with mixes of special needs residents, seniors and low-income families are encouraged. **No market housing** is included in this mix for multi-dwelling developments. It is now understood that the mix of affordable and market options may be required by funders and may be necessary to the financial viability of the project.

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The term 'attainability' is not captured in the 1997 Gabriola OCP and was not commonly understood at that time; however, the term 'attainable housing' is used to describe the ability of households to choose to enter, and graduate to higher levels of, the local housing market. Attainability is the idea that a range of housing options (type, size, tenure, cost) exists in the local market. Households at various income levels can find and secure (attain) suitable housing and can ultimately advance to a different level if they choose (Source: [Belleville Report](#)).

SPECIFIC PARAMETERS IN THE OCP INTENDED TO GUIDE CONSIDERATION OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROPOSALS

The following conditions guide the Local Trust Committee's consideration of affordable housing proposals:

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1. the maximum density shall not exceed 12 units per hectare.
2. the maximum number of dwelling units per development shall not exceed 24.
3. the average size of a dwelling unit shall be not greater than 83 square metres (900 sq.ft).
4. the site shall be within 0.5 kilometres of the Village Core bounded by North, South, and Lockinvar Roads or a 2 kilometre walking distance from the Village Core along public access routes only, and shall provide access to any existing adjacent pedestrian and cycling pathways to the village and ferry services.
5. where practical, in the opinion of the Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee, the site's main access shall be off a main road and not through an existing residential neighbourhood.
6. common area amenities, such as kitchen and recreation facilities, shall be provided for prior to occupancy.
7. the proponent:
 - can ensure the maintenance and stability of affordability in perpetuity.
 - specifies how the housing project will be managed and administered including, if deemed applicable, that it be operated on a not-for-profit basis.
 - specifies the manner in which the housing units will be made available to the identified class of persons at the time the housing units are first occupied and with respect to subsequent occupancy; and
 - specifies the mix of rental and ownership housing units permitted.
8. The OCP specifies that multi-dwelling Affordable Housing applications must demonstrate the lowest possible net water, waste, greenhouse gas emissions and energy use.
9. The Density Bank¹ in this Plan shall be amended from time to time such that any unused residential densities that result from rezoning for parks are added to the Density Bank for use as Multi-dwelling Affordable Housing for low-income families.

¹ The density bank policy will be examined in Topic 3 to be posted on February 17th.

POLICIES GOVERNING SECONDARY SUITES

Affordability is also addressed through policy on the use of secondary suites. Currently on Gabriola, secondary suites are allowed on parcels 2.0 hectares or larger. This is considered a means of addressing the islands' need for diversity in housing options (providing rental housing) and affordability in a rural, low density context (see Gabriola Official Community Plan Policy 2.6.1a). The policy allows for a suite up to 968 sqft.

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HOUSING STANDARDS THAT CURRENTLY APPLY TO HOUSING ON GABRIOLA

The following housing standards must be met to comply with the provincial building code (or equivalent):

1. All residential dwellings built on Gabriola must meet or exceed the BC Building Code standards; OR the CSA manufactured home standards, including seismic standards for anchoring/foundations.
2. A travel trailer, recreational vehicle or tiny home on wheels can only be used temporarily while constructing a permanent dwelling under a RDN Building Permit, and it must be connected to an approved sewage disposal system. The current limit is 2 years, but it can be extended by the Building Inspector (RDN).

TYPES OF HOUSING POSSIBLE UNDER CURRENT OCP/LUB

The following types of housing are permissible under the current OCP and Land Use Bylaw (LUB):

1. Single family dwelling (can be micro home or standard size - no minimum or maximum floor areas)
2. On a residential lot 2ha (5 acres) or larger, one single family dwelling with a secondary suite (either attached, within or detached up to a max 968sqft)
3. Multiple Family dwelling (three or more units) for seniors/special needs/low income in site specific zones
4. In commercial zones, one single family dwelling on a lot with a business (can be above, attached, or detached, no limit to maximum floor area)
5. Manufactured homes (previously called mobile homes) which are CSA approved, and secured to a permanent or semi-permanent foundation. They can be micro or as large as can be constructed to meet the CSA standards.
6. Temporary housing on Gabriola includes permission to use of a recreational vehicle, tiny home on wheels for up to 2yrs while constructing a permanent dwelling on the property with a valid building permit. It must be connected to an approved sewage disposal field.
7. Tents/camping on a vacant lot for up to 90 days/year.

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PLANNING TOOLS AVAILABLE TO ADDRESS NEED AND DIVERSITY

Local governments are responsible for ensuring a suitable supply of housing, in a range of types and locations, to meet community needs now and in the future. Communities accomplish this goal through the land use planning process by ensuring an adequate supply of suitably zoned land, through the regulatory process, and through servicing and other activities. An Official Community Plan (OCP) -- a statement of objectives and policies -- guides decisions on planning, land use management, and development. *Since 1992, policies on affordable, rental and special needs housing must be included in official community plans in BC.*

For Gabriola Island the following tools are currently used to address need and diversity:

1. OCP Land Use Policies and design guidelines (1997)
2. LUB Regulations pertaining to secondary suites (updated 2018)

The following tools are available in BC but *have not yet been used* on Gabriola Island to address housing need and diversity:

1. Updating OCP with Gabriola Housing Needs Assessment findings and possible recommendations (2018)
2. Updating OCP with Affordable and Attainable Housing Policies relevant to current market conditions and housing projections for the region
3. Rental Tenure Housing zoning (to protect rental housing from being converted to owned housing).
4. Provision for mixed use affordable/market housing developments (not strictly just affordable/seniors/special needs)
5. Flexible zoning that strictly controls density, floor area of dwellings, water consumption and energy conservation, and how much of the lot is covered by buildings and structures (lot coverage). Flexible zoning might be created to permit either one large single-family dwelling or two or three small dwellings on a lot built to BC Energy Step Code standard with strict controls on water conservation standards, how much of the lot can be developed or other parameters.

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SUMMARY OF HOUSING TYPES AND REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

Approval for various types of housing is not solely the responsibility of local government. For instance, housing must meet specific requirements as set out in the BC Building Code and the Canadian Standards Association for Manufactured Homes. The following table describes the types of housing and the regulatory requirements for each type.

Housing Type	Building/Construction Standard in Effect	Permitted on Gabriola Island as a Permanent Dwelling	Permitted on Gabriola Island as a temporary dwelling (up to 2yrs while constructing a permanent dwelling)
<p>Conventional Framing constructed on site Can include structurally insulated panels; wood/timber frame; cob; panels; wood/timber frame; cob; rammed earth; steel; strawbale BUT is built to BCBC standards on permanent foundation</p>	BC Building Code	YES	YES
<p>Manufactured home constructed in a factory under CSA Standards and transported to site; placed on semi-permanent or permanent foundation</p>	CSA – Canadian Standards Association for Manufactured Homes	YES	YES
<p>Modular/pre-fab home sections/walls are built offsite in a factory and transported to site then assembled on site placed on approved foundation</p>	CSA – Canadian Standards Association for prefabricated buildings, modules and panels AND BC Building Code for seismic foundation	YES	YES
<p>Micro Homes (approximately 100- 500sqft) built either offsite or onsite. Anchored to an approved foundation</p>	BC Building Code	YES	YES
<p>Recreational Vehicles (RVs, motorhomes, fifth wheels, travel trailer, park model trailers)</p>	CSA – Canadian Standards Association for recreational vehicles	NO - Building Inspector will not permit occupancy under provincial regulations (BCBC)	YES – must be connected to approved sewage disposal system

Housing Type	Building/Construction Standard in Effect	Permitted on Gabriola Island as a Permanent Dwelling	Permitted on Gabriola Island as a temporary dwelling (up to 2yrs while constructing a permanent dwelling)
Tiny Homes on wheels/trailer/chassis	Some tiny home companies offer certain types of certification similar to CSA standard for RVs.	NO – unless dwelling portion can be constructed to meet BC Building Code/CSA and anchored to approved foundation Building Inspector may not permit occupancy under provincial regulations (BCBC)	Possibly – must be connected to approved sewage disposal system Could have issue with using as temporary residence since Building Inspector may not permit occupancy under provincial regulations (BCBC)
Yurt, canvas tents	N/A	NO	Possibly – must be connected to approved sewage disposal system Could have issue with using as temporary residence since Building Inspector may not permit occupancy under provincial regulations (BCBC)