

## Introduction

The findings of the *Gabriola Housing Matters* public engagement process, undertaken between January 13 and March 2, 2021, are the subject of this report to the Gabriola Housing Advisory Planning Commission. This report describes the creation of the Gabriola Housing Working Group and its relationship to the Housing Advisory Planning Commission, and the planning context in which the engagement process was conducted. It includes a description of the methodology employed and the results achieved. The information gathered through background research and the surveys of community members is summarized for each of the major topic areas including findings for each of the survey questions. Finally, an overview is provided of the research findings and the recommendations that evolved from them.

## History of Gabriola Housing Matters

In 2019, the Gabriola 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’ (HOIRP). The goal of the 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” (HOIRP Engagement Strategy, p.1). To oversee this process the LTC appointed a Housing Advisory Planning Commission (HAPC) to create and implement engagement activities in the community, under the direction of the LTC and coordinated by Islands Trust staff.

The reason for the 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 build the capacity of our community to understand the decision(s)” (HOIRP Engagement Strategy, p. 6).

During a phase called “Laying the Groundwork” that began in summer 2019, the HAPC developed an engagement strategy with a schedule of activities for the community – roundtable discussions, forums, interviews and other face-to-face research methods – under the direction of the LTC and coordinated by Islands Trust staff. The public launch of the project occurred November 4, 2019 at the Haven, with an event called “Stories from Home: Exploring Key Themes to Address Gabriola’s Housing Needs While Protecting the Environment”. Snuneymuxw Knowledge Keeper David Bodaly shared stories of the land, and other community members shared their perspectives on housing challenges, care for the ecosystem, ways that other Gulf Island communities and Nanaimo are addressing housing needs, and climate change.

The HAPC's engagement strategy was endorsed by the LTC in February 2020 with the primary research question being framed:

*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 second phase of the HOIRP, "Exploring our Options", was to begin in Spring 2020 and was 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" (HOIRP Engagement Strategy, p.3). However, COVID-gathering restrictions and a severe reduction in Islands Trust staffing and resources to guide the project resulted in an inability to implement the approved engagement plan.

In August 2020, the HAPC was finally able to convene in order to figure out next steps for accomplishing the work, in the likelihood of another wave of COVID and public gathering restrictions. Given these constraints, HAPC members proposed collaborating with other community members as an ad hoc group. This approach meant the group could be more nimble and able to adapt to rapidly changing social conditions in order to execute the engagement work and might expand the base for funding and support to include other key Gabriola organizations. (This idea came from the Lasqueti Community Association model: <https://lasqueti.ca/lca>).

In early November, a small group primarily made up of HAPC members formed the Gabriola Housing Working Group (GHWG) and began to assess what could be done, under current conditions, to fulfill the requirements of the highly engaged consultation process and robust research work that needed to be done. The team chose to build on the highly successful, community dialogue model for respectful, inclusive engagement set up by *Gabriola Talks*, which aimed to "reflect the many different views and ideas that exist in this island community, and to strengthen the capacity of islanders to work together to address difficult issues by building understanding of one another's perspectives and wisdom" (*Gabriola Talks Charter*). Other, non-HAPC members of the community were brought on board to contribute their particular expertise and skills. The GHWG's public engagement process, entitled *Gabriola Housing Matters*, launched on January 13, 2021.

## The Approach

The *Gabriola Housing Matters* public engagement project involved the creation of the following tools:

- A research methodology, including survey design and analysis and outreach activities
- A website for public education and survey distribution
- Preparation of supporting background materials on topics relating to housing, biodiversity, freshwater conservation, and growth management
- Large, attractive ads printed in the local newspaper with key background information for each survey, and
- A final report.

The project was managed through a series of interconnected teams with specific responsibilities and links to external community organizations as described below:

### Project Coordination and Evaluation

- *Tobi Elliott*: Project coordinator and website management; HAPC member; liaison with renters and community at large
- *Dyan Dunsmoor-Farley*: HAPC member; liaison to Gabriola Health and Wellness Collaborative
- *Steve Earle*: HAPC member, liaison to Sustainable Gabriola, and Transportation Network

### Outreach Strategy Team

- *Kenda Chang-Swanson*: Team Lead: HAPC member; liaison to PHC and vulnerable populations
- *Angela Pounds*: HAPC member; liaison to Rural & Remote Division of Family Practice, and vulnerable populations
- *Janice Power*: HAPC Member; liaison to Gabriola Health Auxiliary, general public, and vulnerable populations

### Research, Editorial and Analysis Team

- *Dyan Dunsmoor-Farley*: Team Lead: survey design, survey quantitative analysis, and report writing
- *Jennefer Laidley*: social & economic statistics research; backgrounder writing and design; report editing and design
- *Steve Earle*: HAPC member; editorial support
- *Katharine Patterson*: qualitative analysis and editorial support; liaison with GERTIE and *Gabriola Talks*

## Engagement Strategy and Communication Team

- *Tobi Elliott*: Team Lead
- *Steve Earle*: Sounder Article lead and liaison
- *John Woods*: HAPC member; liaison with Gabriola Chamber of Commerce; employers, employees in need of sustainable, affordable rental housing

## Professional Support Team

- *Sonja Zupanec*: Island Trust Planner; liaison to Gabriola LTC
- *Rob Hellenius*: website design
- *Nola Johnson*: graphic design
- *Chris Mallison*: website hosting

## Project Financing

*Gabriola Housing Matters* was implemented outside of the auspices of the HAPC and was eligible for LTC funding for only direct expenses such as advertising. The LTC provided \$4,000 for advertising and the Gabriola Chamber of Commerce matched the funding, which covered some of the costs of web design, graphic design and web hosting.

The majority of the work was done by volunteers. Over 1000 hours of volunteer time was donated to implement this project, representing between \$44,000 to \$100,000 in value based on professional service rates ranging from \$50/hour to \$100/hour. This is likely a low estimate.

Table 1 shows an estimate of the voluntary hours contributed by team members and their projected actual cost. Note that not all team members are included in this table.

Table 2 below shows the project's funding sources and disbursements.

Team Member	Task	Hours	Total
<b>Kenda Chang-Swanson</b>	Survey interviews and glossary preparation	25	25
<b>Dyan Dunsmoor-Farley</b>	Background documents	30	
	Survey development and revision	105	
	Survey analysis and report drafting	105	
	Final report preparation	50	
	Meetings	50	340
<b>Steve Earle</b>	Meetings	50	
	Writing Sounder articles	75	
	Analysis documents (edits and figures)	30	155

<b>Tobi Elliott</b>	Engagement design	25	
	Website set up	24	
	Website re-writes	30	
	Admin/operations	35	
	Meetings	50	164
<b>Jennefer Laidley</b>	Meetings	40	
	Background documents, research & writing	70	
	Review of survey materials, articles, website copy, etc.	40	
	Final report preparation	50	200
<b>Katharine Patterson</b>	Survey data analysis	45	
	Editorial writing/meetings	12	
	Editing	6	
	Presentation prep	12	
	Meetings	8	83
<b>Rob Hellenius</b>	Additional website work - pro bono	40	40
<b>Total Voluntary Hours Contributed</b>			<b>1007</b>
Billing at \$50/hour			\$50,350
Billing at \$75/hour			\$75,525
Billing at \$100/hour			\$ 100,700
<b>Staff/Planner Time Jan - March (Sonja Zupanec)</b>		56 hours	

<b>Table 2: Revenue and Expenditures</b>	
<b>Revenue</b>	<b>\$</b>
Island Trust Project Funds	3,995.05
Gabriola Chamber of Commerce	4,000.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$7,995.05</b>
<b>Expenditures</b>	
Advertising (Sounder)	4,264.49
Survey Monkey license	102.00
Print and logo design	1,000.00
Web design	1,000.00
Domain name	20.89
Hosting set-up and subscription	189.00
Bank charges	13.50
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$6,589.88</b>
<b>Balance Remaining</b>	<b>\$1,405.17</b>

A condition of the Gabriola Chamber of Commerce funding is that the project provide a legacy platform for ongoing community discourse. The Gabriola Housing Matters website has been transitioned to a community Discourse space to provide this ongoing legacy platform (see: <https://gabriolamatters.ca/>). The outstanding balance from the project funding will be used to ensure that the platform can be used to host important community conversations going forward.

## Planning Context

The GHWG’s primary consideration for this work is to balance Gabriola’s environmental and human needs – to do this we posed the question: how do we protect biodiversity and freshwater resources while recognizing that “the islands are first of all an existing community of people, and the welfare of those people, and those who join them and come after them, must always be a primary concern of the Trust” (Islands Trust 1974 Policy document)? This imperative is reinforced in the [Trust 2003 Policy Statement](#), which establishes three main goals:

- “...preservation and protection of the Trust Area’s ecosystem
- Ensur[ing] that human activity and the scale, rate and type of development in the Trust areas are compatible with maintenance of the integrity of the Trust Areas ecosystems, and
- Sustain[ing] island character and healthy communities”.

To understand the community’s housing needs, the GHWG drew on the *Gabriola Housing Needs Assessment* (Dillon Consulting, 2018). This report suggests that Gabriola’s projected population growth may require an additional 686 housing units, or 28 units per year, by 2041. Over 42% of these units will need to be “affordable” – to meet this projected need, 12 new affordable housing units would need to be built per year for the next 20 years. The data supporting this projected need identified over 130 vulnerable people who access the grocery program (food bank) and other People for a Healthy Community (PHC) services, as well as the “many illegal and inappropriate housing units including garden sheds, mobile homes, recreational vehicles, and summer cottages that have no heat, are improperly insulated, and have no running water or potable water” (Dillon Consulting, 2018).

Need was identified in the following groups: women and children fleeing violence; seniors; young adults; persons living with mental health and addiction problems; LGBTQ2+ persons; racialized individuals; recent immigrants and refugees; people experiencing homelessness; Indigenous people; people with disabilities; and veterans. These data were reinforced by the 2020 *Gabriola Health Report* that showed high

incidence of low-income households with almost 40% of children living in low income, and very high homelessness rates compared to the rest of BC.

The Dillon report included the following recommendations for Gabriola:

1. “Local not-for-profit organizations can acquire land through donation and apply for funding to construct affordable housing
2. The Local Trust Committee can strengthen their affordable housing policies and direction in the OCP to support various forms of affordable housing; and
3. The Local Trust Committee could consider entering into Housing Agreements with individual owners of housing and not-for-profit organizations to ensure affordable housing stays affordable in the long-term” (p.62).

In addition to the Dillon Report, *Gabriola Housing Matters* also drew on findings and recommendations found in *Protecting the Coastal Douglas-fir Zone & Associated Ecosystems – An Islands Trust Toolkit* (2018), *Gulf Islands Groundwater Protection – A Regulatory Toolkit* (2014); and the *Gabriola Health Report* (2020).

## Methodology

Consistent with the HAPC mandate to give Gabriolans “opportunities to learn about and inform policy and regulatory options,” the GHWG implemented a two-pronged engagement design, one focus being education and communication, the other on eliciting Gabriolans’ opinions through three surveys. Between January 20 and March 4, each of the surveys was open for two weeks successively, accessible through the Gabriola Housing Matters website at <http://gabriolahousingmatters.ca/>. Paper copies of each survey were made available at the Gabriola branch of the Vancouver Island Regional Library and through the social service agency People for a Healthy Community (PHC), where staff were available to assist those needing help to complete the survey.

In the week prior to the opening of each survey, two half-page advertisements with information about the survey topic and an invitation to participate were placed in the *Gabriola Sounder*. Information and invitations to participate were also sent to a range of organizations for distribution to their memberships and were posted on Facebook.

Draw prizes were donated by local businesses and organizations for every survey and awarded to participants who chose to enter the draw. To encourage sustained engagement with the survey process, an online discussion forum called Pol.is was made available on the website.

## The Surveys

The surveys were designed to examine how respondents understood and evaluated policies and approaches to addressing housing affordability within the context of environmental and water conservation challenges and growth pressures.

The survey questions were designed to elicit both quantitative and qualitative data. All questions asked respondents to choose an option closest to their own opinion (e.g., strongly agree; agree; disagree; strongly disagree; not sure; or, yes, no, unsure). These answers are easy to tabulate, express as percentages and illustrate graphically. Respondents were not required to answer all questions, and some questions were targeted at particular groups (e.g., owners of larger lots). Most questions gave respondents an opportunity to comment.

The following table shows the distribution of quantitative and qualitative responses for each of the surveys.

<b>Table 3: Summary of Quantitative and Qualitative Responses Across Three Surveys</b>		
<b>Survey</b>	<b>Quantitative Responses</b>	<b>Qualitative Responses</b>
Housing Need, Affordability and Diversity of Supply (Jan 20 - Feb 2)	411	835
Biodiversity, Water Conservation and Housing (Feb 3 - Feb 16)	340	692
Managing Growth and Diversity of Housing Supply (Feb 17 - Mar 2)	336	504
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>1087</b>	<b>2031</b>

## Survey Analytics

Quantitative data was analyzed using the Survey Monkey analysis tool. Each question was assessed for percentage completion and skip rate. Because each survey captured data on respondents’ property status – whether they owned property, rented or were precariously housed – where pertinent, questions were analyzed by two groupings: property owners, and renters/precariously housed individuals. This helped to illuminate whether there were significant differences between those who owned property and those who did not. Where differences existed, the results were noted. Where applicable, results were also compared to existing data (for instance, Census data on core housing need, and proportion of owners to renters).

Comments were analyzed thematically and grouped, the results viewed within the context of the quantitative data for the question, and representative quotations were chosen as illustrations. The qualitative data give a more nuanced view of the survey respondents' take on the issues than the quantitative data alone. Respondents were not required to answer every question in order to move through the survey and some opted to skip questions or parts of questions.

## **Public Education**

To help Gabriolans to learn more about existing policies and regulations as well as housing and environmental concerns, extensive background materials were prepared and presented on the website. Material relevant to each survey could be accessed through a sidebar while answering survey questions or read in advance through the Resources list.

These supporting background documents were:

- Survey 1: *Housing Need on Gabriola; Gabriola Official Community Plan (OCP) Policies Governing Housing*
- Survey 2: *Forest Ecosystems, Protected Land, and Groundwater on Gabriola; GaLTT Conservation Priorities; Key Policies on Biodiversity and Freshwater Conservation for Gabriola Island; and CDF Toolkit*
- Survey 3: *Growth on Gabriola; Key Policies on Managing Growth on Gabriola Island; Gabriola Island Development Potential 2021 Draft Map; and Information about the BC Energy Step Code and Universal Access Design.*

A Glossary of terms was also provided for each survey.

The advertisements which appeared in the *Gabriola Sounder* for each of the three surveys drew on these materials.

All of these background resources can be found in the appendices to this report.

