

REGIONAL DISTRICT OF NANAIMO

**SPECIAL BOARD MEETING
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2008**

**CIRCULATED REPORT
FOR AGENDA**

PAGES

ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORTS

2-11 Islands Trust Funding Support for Affordable Housing Study. (All Directors –
One Vote)

TO: Carol Mason
Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: September 9, 2008

FROM: Paul Thorkelsson
General Manager of Development Services

FILE:

SUBJECT: Affordable Housing Needs Assessment Initiative – Islands Trust

PURPOSE

To consider joining with the Islands Trust as a project partner in the Trust's application to the Real Estate Foundation to fund an affordable housing needs assessment for Electoral Area 'B' – Gabriola Island. (copy of the Trust's application is attached for reference)

BACKGROUND

In response a delegation presentation by representatives from the Islands Trust, the following resolution was passed at the July 22, 2008 Board:

1. That the Board forward a letter of support to the Islands Trust for their affordable housing needs assessment initiative.
2. That the request from the Islands Trust for a funding commitment from the Regional District of Nanaimo as a "Project Partner" be referred to staff for a report.

The letter of support was forwarded to the Trust on July 23, 2008 on behalf of the Board. This report is targeted at the Board's second resolution regarding a financial commitment by the RDN towards the project.

DISCUSSION

As the Board is aware, the availability of affordable housing options have increasingly come under pressure throughout the Regional District of Nanaimo. The Board has provided previous direction to staff, and approved additional resources, to move forward with research and investigation on this issue. The initiative being undertaken by Gabriola fits well with the current Board direction and any information gained from the Gabriola community will potentially be applicable more broadly in the region, and will certainly go toward addressing the affordable housing needs in the Region. RDN staff have just recently released an RFP call for professional consulting services to investigate the topic of affordable housing with focus on the sectors of housing needs in the RDN electoral areas, forms of housing best suited to address these needs and where these housing types would/could be developed. The initiative proposed by the Islands Trust dovetails quite nicely with the work proposed at the RDN.

The Islands Trust has requested financial support from the RDN in the form of a \$3000.00 contribution to the initiative. Although there is not currently a line item in the 2008 budget appropriate for this purpose, the Board did recently approve the inclusion of Electoral Area 'B' into the Regional Growth function. Inclusion in the service area will generate additional revenue in 2009 and funds could be made available for the project from the 2009 budget.

ALTERNATIVES

1. To provide a financial contribution toward the Islands Trust affordable housing initiative and join the Trust as a "project partner" in the funding application to the Real Estate Foundation under the 2009 Regional Growth Budget.
2. To deny the funding request from the Islands Trust and not directly participate in the initiative.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

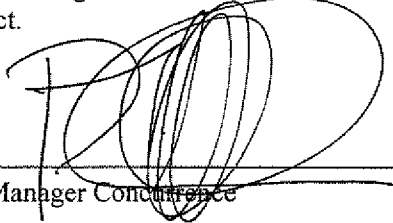
There is no funding source defined in the 2008 Budget to support this initiative. An alternative source of funds is required to provide the requested funding support.

SUMMARY/CONCLUSIONS

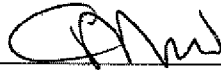
The Islands Trust has requested the Board to provide a funding contribution towards an affordable housing needs assessment project on Gabriola Island. The proposed project aligns with, and will complement work on affordable housing underway by the RDN. Although no funding source has been established for this purpose in the 2008 budget, with the recent inclusion of Electoral Area 'B' in the Regional Growth Service Area, funds can be allocated from the 2009 budget.

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the Regional District of Nanaimo join the Islands Trust as a project partner on the proposed affordable housing assessment initiative for Gabriola Island.
2. That funding in the amount of \$3000.00 be allocated from the 2009 Regional Growth Budget to the project.



General Manager Concurrence



CAO Concurrence

COMMENTS:

CIT's mission is to support values-based planning processes that balance social, environmental, economic and governance concerns to address regional and local land use and conservation issues in non-metropolitan areas of BC.

APPLICANT INFORMATION

Applying Organization: Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee
Address: 700 North Road
City & Province: Gabriola Island, BC
Postal Code: V0R 1X3
Website URL: <http://www.islandstrust.bc.ca/>
Contact Person: Chris Jackson
Position: Regional Planning Manager, Northern office
Phone: 250-247-2207
Fax: 250-247-7514
E-mail: cjackson@islandstrust.bc.ca

Board of Directors

Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee Members:
Kim Benson, Chair
Sheila Malcolmson, Local Trustee
Gisele Rudischer, Local Trustee

Islands Trust and Regional District of Nanaimo staff will also be involved with this project.

Mission Statement and History of the Islands Trust:

The Islands Trust is a federation of independent local governments which plans land use and regulates development in the trust area. In 1974, in recognition of the special nature of the islands in the Strait of Georgia and Howe Sound, the Government of British Columbia enacted the *Islands Trust Act* to protect this unique part of the world. This remarkable area is home to an exceptional variety of species of birds, fish, intertidal life, wildlife and plants.

Outstanding scenery and recreational resources include panoramic viewpoints, sheltered bays with secluded beaches, protected marine waterways and anchorages and pastoral vistas. The islands also support strong communities characterized by a mix of lifestyles, livelihoods and individuals. Island residents join together to bring special skills and viewpoints to sustain a tradition of community involvement.

The Islands Trust's mandate is to preserve and protect the Trust area and its unique amenities and environment for the benefit of the residents of the Trust area and of British Columbia generally. The reasons the province created the Islands Trust as a land use and planning agency 30 years ago are still valid. This mandate underlies the work of the Islands Trust, including the development of official community plans, zoning and other land use bylaws in each of the local trust areas or island municipality.

PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Title: Gabriola Island Affordable Housing Needs Assessment

Amount Applied For: \$11,200

Total Project Budget: \$17,200

1. Why is this project important?

Like many small rural communities in British Columbia, Gabriola Island has undergone many changes in recent years that have had substantial impacts on the traditional rural lifestyle and local economy. A dramatic increase in housing prices over a relatively short period of time has had a serious and negative impact on the community. Over the past 5 years there has been a 316% increase in the median price of land sales and a 125% increase in the price of homes.

Gabriola Island is a favoured retirement and vacation destination, and tourism and recreation investment have fueled these rapidly increasing housing prices. Increasingly, homes are being purchased and built by seasonal residents, with resulting affordability pressures for long-time Gabriola Island residents. There is no indication that this trend will subside in the foreseeable future.

Gabriola Island is expecting continued and substantial population growth over the next 15 years. The population increased by 15% in the last census to 4,050. The population of the Georgia Basin, which includes the Gulf Islands, is expected to grow by 35% by 2020. On Gabriola, however, there is also a shift in demographic, measured by the number of students in elementary school, where the enrollment has declined 20%. Residents are increasingly concerned about their own and their families' ability to remain on the island. Local businesses are having increasing difficulty in hiring and retaining employees due to the lack of affordable housing units.

Community Housing Forum

In response to the ongoing housing affordability/accessibility problems on Gabriola, concerned islanders met at a first Gabriola Island Forum in June 2007 (this report is attached electronically). There is a felt sense that there are target groups of residents in need of housing in the community which include young families, people living on island salaries, single parents, disabled persons, homeless persons, and those living in sub-standard housing, as well as the elderly on small fixed incomes.

Next steps recommended by the Gabriola Forum highlight the need for detailed information required to more accurately define and confirm the perceived need for affordable housing, and provide data that could address concerns about maintaining community diversity, and the effect housing issues have on the availability of staff for local businesses, for example. The Gabriola Forum meeting concluded that before we could start exploring solutions, this information needs to be verified and quantified. We need to take a closer look at the changing demographic revealed in the 2006 Census: a 15% population increase since 2001. One of the best ways to objectively evaluate housing need is a **Housing Needs Assessment**.

The Gabriola Local Trust Committee has been unable to act on community requests to establish a housing Task Force, due to funding and staff scarcity. A Housing Needs Assessment could assist in an examination of the community context and play an essential part in the preparation of the next OCP Review.

OCP Review

The **Housing Needs Assessment** will inform the upcoming review of the Gabriola OCP, ensuring that affordable housing issues are addressed in the next round of amendments. Gabriola's Official

Community Plan was last reviewed in 1997. There is no provision for affordable/community housing in this OCP, except as outlined below:

2.5 Single Family Affordable Housing

Background: A community plan is intended to contain a statement concerning the provision of affordable housing in the community. On Gabriola, where there is no provision for multi-family housing, allowance for an accessory cottage on parcels 2.0 hectares or larger, is looked upon as an appropriate means of addressing the island's needs for affordable housing.

Objectives: To ensure a supply of affordable housing is provided for on Gabriola in a manner which does not detract from Gabriola's rural island character.

Policies:

- a) Provision for an accessory cottage on a parcel of 2.0 hectares or larger (as per policy 2.1g), shall be recognized as the Gabriola Island means of providing for affordable housing in a rural low-density context.

2.4 Special Needs and Seniors Multi-family Affordable Housing

Background: The OCP makes no provision for multi-family housing (i.e. apartments, townhouses) Yet, in recognition of allowing Gabriola residents who become elderly to continue to be able to live in the planning area, provision has been made for housing opportunities which provide for the special needs of this group. For the purposes of the Plan special needs housing refers to the housing of persons who are physically or mentally challenged. Future applicationsshall be evaluated in terms of their compliance with the following objectives and policies:

Objectives:

1. To ensure that provision is made for special needs and Seniors' affordable multi-family housing in a manner which responds adequately to the needs of these groups;
2. To provide for such housing in a location which is accessible to appropriate services and acceptable to the overall community.

Policies:

There are 6 items which outline parameters for this category, at page 14 of the OCP at: <http://www.islandstrust.bc.ca/lrc/gb/pdf/gbbylbaseocp0166.pdf>

2. What will this project accomplish?

The goal of this project is to provide the Trust Committee, housing providers (non-profit and private) and the general community with an objective view of the current and forecasted housing situation. Specifically, this project will provide the following:

- Accurate information with respect to housing on Gabriola including income and affordability, tenure, size and suitability according to family size and composition, service and special needs.
- Analysis of the needs of the Gabriola community relative to housing availability, options, and affordability
- Identification of alternative approaches to addressing the housing affordability needs on Gabriola island, with a particular focus on land use planning tools the Local Trust Committee could adopt to facilitate affordable community housing.

Housing needs change over time, in response to changes in demographics, new housing supply, and various economic and social conditions. This Housing Needs Assessment will be used as a baseline, and it will be updated periodically over the years to ensure that the housing strategy and

policies continue to meet the community's changing needs. In the short term, the results from the proposed Housing Needs Assessment can be an important tool in assisting the Local Trust Committee with OCP changes related to affordable housing policy. In the longer term, it will also help guide its land use decisions relating to re-zoning applications and requests for increased densities for housing. It will also be of benefit to assist housing providers in targeting their development proposals to areas of greatest community priority and need.

3. Implementation Plan:

For balanced and comprehensive coverage it is essential that there be a number of kinds of data collected, and each collected and analyzed in the most appropriate manner. For this project the data sources, data collection methods, and data analysis include quantitative data, in the form of statistics and tabulated responses to a community survey and qualitative data in the form of in-depth interviews, community survey responses and group consultation. The process is iterative. As information is gathered and analysis carried out, that process informs the next steps.

The following steps describe what information and types of methodologies a consultant will be asked to gather, then used to inform the next step as well as the final report.

- A. Information gathering stage
 - a. Consultant meetings with LTC and Islands Trust Planner
 - b. *Info gathering re: statistics
- B. **Interviews:
 - a. Housing Solutions Task Force
 - b. Real Estate Foundation
 - c. Regional District of Nanaimo
 - d. People for a Healthy Community
 - e. Chamber of Commerce
- C. Analysis of statistical data and Interviews
- D. Interim report
- E. **Development of Survey tool
- F. Implementation of Survey. In order to ensure full access to the survey it will be available on line, in local gathering places and at the Commons (ensuring availability for users of the Food Depot in the same building).
- G. Further community inquiry – session open to community members or other form of community information gathering, based on the information received from survey and other data.
- H. Analysis and recommendations – final report

*The statistical data collected will include the following:

Background – census, property tax, CMHC data
Demographic characteristics and trends

Employment/Income characteristics and trends
Description of the existing housing stock, including unit type and size of dwelling
Rental rates and availability
Residential property values and trends by type of unit/lot
(the Gabriola Community Profile funded by the Local Trust Committee in early 2008 will be used as a starting point for this work)

Development Trends/Projections – BC Stats, building permits

Rate of development over time
Projected development of new housing units
Market segment targets of development

**Data collected through interviews and survey will include the following

Consumer Trends/Preferences – Real Estate Board, surveys & consultations

Who is buying and renting (motivations, preferences)
Who is selling (motivations, preferences)

Housing Gaps/Needs - analysis of results above to answer:

Who are residents (consumption, needs and challenges)?
What are their needs/preferences?
What market, non-market gaps can be identified?

4. Project Partners, Collaborators and Personnel Resources:

The Islands Trust will be the lead organization for the conduct of the Housing Needs Assessment, hiring a consultant and working with the following groups and organizations:

The steering group for the Housing Solutions Forum will be helpful in this study, providing insight into perceived needs identified in the forum, solutions and key contacts within the Gabriola community.

Islands Trust contracted students at Malaspina University College to carry out a community profile for Gabriola Island this spring. Included in the information collected were statistics that will inform the housing needs assessment. This data will form part of the statistical data collected for this project. The report is available at <http://www.islandstrust.bc.ca/lrc/gb/default.cfm>

The Island Trust will ensure consultation with People for a Healthy Community, so the voices of those living below the poverty line are included in this study. People for a Healthy Community currently run the Food Depot, violence prevention and response, and citizen advocate consultations.

The Regional District of Nanaimo's Regional Growth Strategy recognizes the need for more expansive policies on affordable housing, and RDN staff will share data and mapping to support this project. Gabriola Island is under Islands Trust legislation for the land use planning function, but data collection is part of a shared mandate.

The relationship between the Capital Regional District and Salt Spring LTC (who are carrying out a housing needs assessment funded by REF) is one of reciprocal maintenance and as such is a model of partnership to inspire the partners of this project on Gabriola.

5. Project Start and End Dates:

The project is scheduled to begin October 1, 2008 and be completed January 15, 2009

6. Promotion and Outreach Plans:

The Islands Trust wishes to encourage a very wide participation in the survey and consultation process. In order to ensure meaningful and reliable information is received, it is very important to get a significant survey response from residents. To achieve this, the survey will be widely advertised in local newspapers, be available electronically on the Islands Trust website and be available through People for a Healthy Community.

It is equally desirable to get feedback from the community on the evaluation of the results of the research. Community members, housing and service providers, and community leaders and influencers will be invited to attend presentations and information about the results of the study will be provided to the local media. This will be accomplished by combining this information with other planned OCP review sessions and/or in smaller Focus Group settings.

7. Evaluation:

	Goal	Indicators
Intended Outcomes	The goal of this project is to provide the Trust Committee, housing providers (non-profit and private) and the general community with an objective view of the current and forecasted housing situation.	Accurate information with respect to housing on Gabriola including income and affordability, tenure, size and suitability according to family size and composition, service and special needs. Analysis of the needs of the Gabriola community relative to housing availability, options, environmental impact and affordability Identification of alternative approaches to addressing the housing affordability needs on Gabriola island.
Audiences	Trust Committee, housing providers (non-profit and private), general community with opportunity for input and receipt of final information	Success in gaining community input Accessibility of final report for all community members
Capacity building	Develop increased understanding by Gabriola community of affordable housing solutions	Affordable housing solutions identified by community
Sustainable	Data that assists Islands Trust in formulating housing strategy and conducting OCP review. Housing Providers in making successful proposals, and willingness of funders to contribute.	Increased affordable housing options on Gabriola

8. Project Budget:

Project Tasks

A. Information gathering *	\$3,600	
B. Interviews	800	
C. Analysis of statistical data and Interviews	2,800	
D. Interim report	600	
E. Development of Survey tool	800	
F. Implementation of Survey	1,200	
G. Further community inquiry	1,600	
H. Analysis and recommendations – final report	<u>2,800</u>	14,200

Expenses

Room Rental	500	
Website Survey	1,000	
Printing and misc. costs	<u>1,500</u>	3,000

Total	\$17,200
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Source of Funds

Real Estate Foundation (CIT)	\$11,200
Islands Trust *	3,000
Regional District of Nanaimo	<u>3,000</u>

Total	\$17,200
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* \$2,000 has already been committed to the Gabriola Community Profile developed by Malaspina College, so the total contribution to the housing needs assessment by the Islands Trust will be \$3,000 if the project proceeds.

SIGNING AUTHORITY & PRIVACY DISCLOSURE

*Applications must be signed by an officer of the applicant organization's Board of Directors.
Educational institutions should follow normal authorization procedures.*

By signing this grant application, I acknowledge that my organization is committed to account for the receipt and expenditure of funds as well as the conduct of the proposed project. I understand that the Real Estate Foundation reserves the right to impose an audit on the use of Foundation funds. I also acknowledge that the Real Estate Foundation may disclose any and all information that my organization submits to the Foundation, as required under Freedom of Information legislation.



Name, Position in Organization

July 14/08

Date

CRAIG ELDER
Director, Administrative Services

Name, Position in Organization

Date