

GABRIOLA HOUSING SOCIETY – BOARD OF DIRECTORS REPORT FOR 2018

PRESENTED AT THE APRIL 24, 2019 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

BACKGROUND

The Gabriola Housing Society (GHS) was incorporated as a non-profit society in January 2013 but remained inactive for a few years. In 2016 & 2017 the society re-organized itself in order to begin addressing affordable housing for people with low to moderate incomes on Gabriola Island. By December 2018, about 70 people were members of the Society, with six members serving on the Board of Directors. The GHS purpose is to “*relieve poverty by supporting and/or developing and/or operating housing projects that provide housing to people with low incomes on Gabriola Island*” (Constitution, October 2018).

BOARD ACTIVITIES IN 2018

January to December 2018: Participated in the “Housing Options Review Project (Phases I & II)” of the Local Trust Committee

- The purpose of Phase 1 (completed in June 2018) was “*To increase opportunities for a wider range of housing options on Gabriola Island by reviewing relevant Official Community Plan (OCP) policies and Land Use Bylaw (LUB) regulations.*” (Phase 1 Charter, 2016).
- The purpose of Phase 2 (started June 2018 and ongoing) is “*To increase housing options on Gabriola Island through [changes to] Official Community Plan (OCP) policies and Land Use Bylaw (LUB) regulations, in a manner which supports the Object of the Islands Trust (IT), strengthens relations with Snuneymuxw First Nation and builds on the findings of the [IT] 2018 Northern Region Housing Needs Assessment.*” (Phase 2 Charter, 2018)
 - One Objective in Phase II is of particular significance for GHS: “*Explore opportunities to foster affordable, rental, special needs and seniors housing and associated services on Gabriola Island in collaboration with Snuneymuxw First Nation, the RDN, health and housing service providers and community groups.*”
- During 2018, Board members attended all pertinent meetings of the Local Trust Committee to keep updated. As well, on several occasions Board members provided verbal comments for the Trustees’ consideration and decisions.

May 2018: Sponsored a “Forum on Affordable Housing” for the Gabriola community

- Purpose: “*to provide an opportunity for discussion of multi-dwelling housing models that address the lack of affordable housing for people with low to moderate incomes*”
- About 50 people attended; they provided lively discussions and gave the Board several ideas for next steps, which were incorporated into a comprehensive report that has influenced the Board’s subsequent steps.

June 2018: Reviewed the IT-sponsored “North Islands Housing Needs Assessment” (June 2018)

- This document is an important guide for the plans of GHS. Significant information includes (**bold print added**):
 - **Rental housing is needed, not ownership**: “*The key housing need for all of the islands was the need for safe, year-round affordable accessible appropriate **rental** accommodation*” (p.iv)
 - **Over half the renters on Gabriola are in sub-standard homes**: Of the 365 rental households on Gabriola in 2015, **210 (57%)** are in “*core housing need*”: i.e. not “*adequate*” (repairs needed), and/or “*suitable*” (enough bedrooms for the tenants), and/or “*affordable*” (costs less than 30% of before-tax income). (p.49, quoting 2016 Census)

July to December 2018: Began work on a plan for its first housing project – Affordable, rental, multi-dwelling housing (~24 units, yet-to-be decided design, average 900 sq ft) for households of low to moderate incomes.

Generally-accepted definitions:

- *"Affordable housing": A household spends 30% or less of its before-tax household income on housing. (For a household with \$48,000 before-tax annual income, affordable housing would cost \$14,400 or less per year.)*
- *"Low income": A household's before-tax income is less than half of the median (middle amount) household before-tax income for the region according to the Statistics Canada Census. (The median before-tax annual household income for Gabriola in 2016 is \$48,000. Thus, low income for a household on Gabriola is less than \$24,000 per year.)*
- *"Moderate income": Income is between half of the median to the median before-tax annual household income. (For Gabriola in 2016, this is between \$24,000-\$48,000.)*
- **CRA registration of GHS as a charity:** The Board worked with a charities lawyer to prepare the GHS application. At a special members' meeting in October the purpose of the society was revised for clarity, and then the application was submitted to the CRA in early November. (The Board expects to receive approval in mid-2019. A registered charity can issue tax receipts for donations and is eligible for a wider range of funding sources.)
- **Search for property:** The Board researched several properties in the Village area, using specific criteria as well as information from other Gulf Islands affordable rental housing projects, and then chose a few top-priority sites to pursue more thoroughly in early 2019. (Several major funders for affordable housing projects require an organization to own property in order to apply.)
- **Search for a development consultant to manage the establishment of the first housing project:** The Board gathered information from BC Housing (Ministry of Municipal Affairs & Housing), BC Non-Profit Housing Association and other Gulf Island housing projects, and then created a plan to contract a development consultant in the spring of 2019.

Grant from Gabriola Auxiliary for Island Health Care Society (GAIHCS)

In September 2018 the Board applied to the annual grants program of the GAIHCS and was pleased to receive \$4,200. The grant is assisting the Board to *"seek out the necessary land, funding and building expertise needed to provide an affordable multi-dwelling rental housing development on Gabriola Island for people with low to moderate incomes"*. (Grant Application, September 2018)

Participation in Various Events, Conferences and Meetings

As well as their work on the above activities, Board members participated in several events and meetings that related to affordable housing. These included gatherings of the following groups:

- Gabriola Village Vision
- Sustainable Gabriola
- Gabriola Health & Wellness Collaborative
- Gabriola Housing Collaborative

Respectfully submitted,

Board of Directors, Gabriola Housing Society, April 24, 2019

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