

GABRIOLA HOUSING SOCIETY – BOARD OF DIRECTORS REPORT FOR 2019

PRESENTED AT THE SEPTEMBER 30, 2020 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

BACKGROUND

The Gabriola Housing Society (GHS) was incorporated as a non-profit society in January 2013 and then was inactive for a few years. In 2016 the society re-organized itself and began addressing affordable housing for people with low to modest incomes on Gabriola Island. By December 2019, GHS had about 75 members, with seven 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 to modest incomes on Gabriola Island” (November 2019).*

The North Islands Housing Needs Assessment (June 2018) set the stage for the Board’s work in 2019. Significant information includes:

- **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 in 2016, 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, 2016 Census)

BOARD ACTIVITIES IN 2019

As stated in the 2018 Directors’ Report, in late 2018 the Board began planning a housing project: affordable, rental, multi-dwelling housing (24 homes, average 900 sq ft) for households with low to modest incomes.

In early 2019, the Board established an ambitious timeline for the housing project:

- 2019: Initial development work; submit a rezoning application to the Local Trust Committee in December
- 2020: Continue development work; achieve rezoning approvals by early 2021
- 2021: Final rezoning approvals and construction
- 2022: Final construction and occupancy

For the first few months of 2019, the Board worked on the housing project several directions:

- recruiting a Development Consultant
- looking for property near the village that would be suitable for an affordable rental housing project
- finding ways to raise money for initial development expenses
- applying for charitable status for GHS
- creating a GHS website

Then in the springtime, the work started to show results!

MAY – GHS received approval from the CRA as a registered charity, which is a significant indicator of credibility of GHS as well as a criterion for government funding. Almost immediately, GHS received a generous donation from an anonymous donor, which helped pay for initial expenses in the fall of 2019.

MAY – GHS received a timely \$15,000 loan from the new Gabriola Community Investment Co-operative, to help pay for development expenses planned for the fall of 2019.

JUNE – The Board hired Ian Scott (based in Victoria) as the Development Consultant for GHS. Ian provides management expertise in many areas of creating an affordable housing project and is a steady source of encouragement for the Board.

JULY – The Board submitted an application for a major \$100,000 Project Development Fund loan from BC Housing (government organization that manages the BC government’s funding for affordable housing).

AUGUST – GHS received a very generous donation from Emcon Services of eight acres of very suitable land surrounding Paisley Place, within easy walking distance of the village.

AUGUST – The GHS website was launched – gabriolahousing.ca The GHS website is kept updated with current information about the housing project, as well as information about ways to donate, etc.

SEPTEMBER – The wells (dug in 2011) at Paisley Place were tested, with positive results for supplying the project

SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER – The area’s soil and ecology were surveyed, including noting significant trees to retain.

OCTOBER – GHS received a \$30,000 grant from the VanCity Community Fund, to help pay for initial development expenses. As well, GHS received \$6,000 from Gabriola Auxiliary for Island Health Care Society (GAIHCS), to help pay for initial development expenses.

OCTOBER - NOVEMBER – Tentative site plans for a 24-unit housing development were drawn up by a site designer, showing how the dwellings’ locations minimize tree removal and preserve trail connections.

NOVEMBER – Community Consultation Meeting at the Community Hall on November 16, 2019, with about 90 people in attendance. The purpose was to provide information about the Board’s current work on the affordable housing project, and to hear questions and comments from the participants.

The Board presented the Vision and Guiding Principles for the Paisley Place project:

- *Vision: Affordable, comfortable, secure rental housing for Gabriolan of all ages who have low to modest incomes*
- *Guiding Principles:*
 - o *Build healthy and efficient homes*
 - o *Build homes near services and public transportation routes*
 - o *Respect the natural settings and limits of the development sites*
 - o *Provide affordable housing for a mix of Gabriolans to encourage a sense of community*
 - o *Keep rents affordable with modest development and operational costs*
 - o *Consider residents' living experience in site and building design*

Ian Scott presented the site plans and other information. A report of the meeting is posted on the GHS website.

DECEMBER – GHS conducted a survey of individuals who are possibly eligible and interested in living in such rental housing. The response was encouraging, with 129 people providing useful information as the project proceeds.

DECEMBER – GHS board hired a modular housing builder to submit floorplans for eight triplex buildings, each with three ground-level dwellings, to be built in two clusters around greenspaces and parking areas. The current plan is for eight studio, eight 1-bedroom, three 2-bedroom, and five 3-bedroom units.

JANUARY 15, 2020 – The Board achieved a major goal of its 2019 work: submission of the rezoning application to the Local Trust Committee for the housing project on Paisley Place.

Respectfully submitted,

Board of Directors, Gabriola Housing Society, December 31, 2019

Sibyl Frei, Jenni Gehlbach, Margy Gilmour, Nancy Hetherington Peirce, Martin Humphries, Barry Loescher, Dave Neads, Jim Ramsay.