

# Brief in Support of a request to meet with the RDN Board of Directors

## Background

Village Vision, a community-led planning process, was established in 2013 to guide the development of a proactive, comprehensive, long-term vision of the future of Gabriola Island's village core. This was accomplished through: community meetings and workshops; presentations by experts; in-person and on-line surveys; and a 2-day planning exercise conducted by Masters of Community Planning students from Vancouver Island University. These activities resulted in a comprehensive report identifying principles and objectives to address key issues like traffic circulation, public gathering spaces and infrastructure, water management, housing, cultural presence, and environment and ecology. Throughout the process the Village Vision Planning Committee worked closely with the Local Trust Committee, the Regional District of Nanaimo and the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure in order to ensure that the concepts favoured by the community were grounded in reality.

Several 'big ideas' for the transformation of Gabriola's village core were generated through the Village Vision process, and we are actively working with key partners to implement the ideas generated through the community consultations.

The Regional District of Nanaimo is a key partner in achieving this vision. There are three areas in which the RDN mandate plays a pivotal role: its ability to acquire land; recreation and parks planning; and, as a legal entity recognized by the Province of BC, it has the authority to engage with provincial ministries whose mandates affect Gabriola, such as the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MoTI).

Achieving many of the objectives identified in the Village Vision report will require the support of the RDN. Ultimately, we would like to work with the RDN to develop a plan to address the core elements necessary for a comprehensive village core plan. In the near term, we have identified two areas that need to be focused on.

## Objective and Goals

While there are many recommendations in the Village Vision report, there are two primary goals that are fundamental to a coherent village core:

1. Acquiring property: (a) that could be used to create a focal community gathering place that could meet a variety of needs (e.g., a community events/recreation building on a property large enough to accommodate a variety of community needs); and (b) that could be suitable for affordable housing in the Village core (would require zoning change).
2. Working with Islands Trust and MoTI to ensure a coherent, safe, accessible and rurally appropriate transportation corridor from Tin Can Alley to the BC Ferries terminal. This would potentially include:
  - a. a Village pedestrian pathway system
  - b. establishing North Road as the Village 'main street' with attendant traffic calming
  - c. addressing safety issues for all users

With regard to this second goal, Village Vision recently made a presentation to the Executive Committee of the Islands Trust urging that the 1992 Letter of Agreement between the Trust and MoTI be amended so that "village" area roads of the Islands Trust islands can be made safe and welcoming to pedestrians, cyclists and motorists. Our proposal is to create a mechanism for citizen-led groups to work with their LTCs and Regional

Districts, to formulate infrastructure improvements that will enhance safety for everyone and provide more options for cyclists and pedestrians in their communities. This proposal was very well received and is being pursued by IT officials.

### **Our request to the RDN**

- We request the RDN to engage with the Islands Trust and MoTI to encourage the development of a letter of agreement (LOA) consistent with creating a coherent, safe, accessible and rurally-appropriate transportation corridor for village cores to replace the out-of-date 1992 LOA.
- We encourage the RDN to continue their efforts with MoTI to ensure that a road side pedestrian trail (the Village Way) can be built along North Road on Gabriola.

We appreciate the efforts of our Director and the support of his RDN colleagues in helping us address these important issues. In return we are happy to meet with RDN Directors from rural areas (and with relevant community representatives) to discuss how a process of community-led planning can result in engaged citizens creating a vision for more livable village areas within the RDN.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Village Vision planning group,

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cc: Howard Houle, Regional Director Area “B”