

Denman Community Land Trust Association Delegation to Trust Council
September 13, 2017

Thank you for providing Denman Community Land Trust Association (DCLTA) with this opportunity.

My presentation will ask the Trust Council to take two specific steps to help shift affordable housing from talk to action. One is to expand the Islands Trust Policy Statement to address affordable housing and the other is to create a model policy for LTCs wanting to move affordable housing proposals from concept to reality.

The Trust has a history of examining the need for affordable housing on the islands. The following are important investigations:

In January 2010, the Islands Trust Community Housing “Tool Kit” was issued. Among its many significant recommendations, the Trust was urged to amend the Islands Trust Policy Statement, “giving affordable housing a greater profile for its role in sustainable communities” and to adopt an Affordable Housing First policy at the Local Trust Committee level.

And, in June 2016, in conjunction with the Islands Trust Forum on Community Housing a baseline report on affordable housing in the Trust area was issued, followed by the final report *Community Housing in the Trust Area*. Both these reports reiterate a key recommendation from the Tool Kit, namely:

THAT Trust Council review the Islands Trust Policy Statement to ensure that it:

- a) includes a clear and well-thought out definition of ‘affordability’*
- b) includes clearly articulated vision, goal and objectives for affordable housing*
- c) gives affordable housing a greater profile for its role in sustainable communities*
- d) includes a reference to affordable housing in its policy direction to LTCs and municipalities*

Today’s Council meeting has the power to initiate a Policy Statement review to address affordable housing. Last week, DCLTA applied for a bylaw amendment for its Seniors’ Affordable Housing proposal. In preparing the application, we found ample support in our OCP but nothing in the Policy Statement beyond a vague reference to “diversity.”

We realize that amending the Policy Statement is a politically sensitive undertaking as well as a demanding and lengthy process. However, with a new provincial government, the time has come to start the process and thus implement a recommendation which spans nearly a decade.

Neither of the 2016 reports includes the further Tool Kit recommendation that LTCs adopt an Affordable Housing First policy. An Affordable Housing First policy could facilitate fast tracking the amendment process, enhance cooperation within the process, shrink time lags, reduce fees and minimize requirements for non-profits initiating affordable housing projects.

This Council meeting has the power to create an affordable housing first policy to be placed in the Trust Council Policies and Procedures Manual as a model for LTCs wanting to assist community groups undertaking the development of affordable housing.

The following recommendations from the 2010 Tool Kit provide a start:

THAT Local Trust Committees adopt an 'affordable housing first' policy for applications, giving priority in the application queue.

That Local Trust Committees direct staff to take all opportunities to process (or assist applicants to process) multiple functions in parallel.

Given our experience with DCLTA's pilot project, we suggest that an affordable housing first policy should also include the recommendation that LTCs direct staff to work with the community group to enhance cooperation and communication within the process. Trustee Critchley can speak to the costly and time-consuming communication glitches in the drafting of our pilot project's Housing Agreement.

Across the Trust Area, Salt Spring Island appears to be the only LTC that has reduced the application fees for bylaw amendments that address affordable housing. To our knowledge, no LTC has adopted an affordable housing first policy – perhaps because there is no model. Drawing on the collective experience of 26 local trustees, this Trust Council could provide a model policy, advice for its adoption and technical support for its implementation, thus avoiding future costly and time-consuming glitches such as we experienced.

It's time to translate community housing ideas from reports, committee work and forums into a review of the Trust Policy Statement and the creation of a model affordable housing first policy for use across the Trust Area.

To learn more about DCLTA and our work to create affordable housing for low-income residents on Denman Island, please visit our web site.

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