

Housing and Water

By Patrick Lockie
Gulf Islands Driftwood - Letter to Editor
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Positively Forward has long been a strong supporter of affordable housing, advocating for the development of nonmarket housing in or around Ganges Village, which has the benefit of a sewage treatment plant, close proximity to transit and other community services. One of the main constraints thus far has been lack of water.

Consequently, The North Salt Spring Waterworks District's (NSSWD) announcement that there may be supply for up to 300 new connections in the Maxwell Lake service area, which includes Ganges Village, is welcome news. However, swift and thoughtful action is needed to take advantage of this potential new source of water in Ganges. NSSWD has already stated that it cannot prioritize affordable housing for new connections. Properties that may be in competition with affordable housing projects for water connections need to be identified so that local government can plan accordingly.

Our Official Community Plan (OCP) has a vital role to play in planning for sustainable future growth. We urge the Local Trust Committee to stand firm and deny any proposal for increases in zoning density— i.e., the number of allowable units on a property—unless the property is legally obligated to provide affordable housing. This is what our Official Community Plan (OCP) currently requires, as stated in Bylaw 2.1.2.1: Upzoning is only for affordable housing.

Alarming, this protection against over development could be lost through potential changes in the OCP/LUB Update process now underway. The policy expressed in Policy B 2.1.2.1 is threatened by those who wish to rewrite our OCP in order to rezone residential properties, allowing a second residence rather than keeping density in an already developed hub. Others want to increase density on high elevation lots now zoned for low density, specifically to protect the vital role these forested areas play in recharging groundwater across the island. Let's make sure a policy which provides for the kind of development this island needs most to meet affordable housing requirements is not sacrificed in the interests of a misguided approach to growth.

We commend the Local Community Commission's initiative to organize a think tank on affordable housing with a view to creating a Housing Strategic Plan for the island and we look forward to our invitation to participate in the conversation.

Patricia Lockie,

Chair, Positively Forward