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Home builders anxious not to lose another season

Galiano Land and Community Housing Trust says that is taken aback that the build-your-own-home on leased land initiative, aimed at younger people who are sorely needed to keep the entire islands' way of life alive, has not been given a public hearing ahead of local government elections.

Tom Hennessy, chairperson, says that Galiano Land and Community Housing Trust's unusual and innovative project has been underway and under scrutiny for three years, since twenty-six islanders loaned \$229,000, interest free, to purchase the land. He says over the years, the Galiano Housing Trust has willingly jumped through many hoops like commercial appraisal, site layout, roads, geotech, rainwater harvesting, fire suppression and creating an appropriate housing agreement. A huge amount of islander and Islands Trust time has been devoted to creating a viable project.

Throughout construction, says Hennessy, the CRD will have control of the project through the building permit process. The 20-unit, 'village-like' project's buildings and site infrastructure will have features like rainwater collection, and use sustainable building technologies which are an improvement over the norm.

Community-aware credit union VanCity, which has been involved in and has funded \$36,000 of grants for the project, is eager to use the model throughout BC, even in cities, once the Galiano Green prototype is underway. The Galiano Loan Fund Society has also guaranteed a \$20,000 construction loan, from CCEC Credit Union, to the society to build a demo house. All this awaits a successful public hearing.

Affordable housing, says Hennessy, is core to thriving island communities—'it's the basis of everything'. The working help of energetic young people enables older folks to stay in their island homes and they create many of the facets of island life which

build a vibrant community for all to enjoy.

Hennessy says that \$120,000 has been required to be spent on consultants' reports, studies and infrastructure improvements many of which normally would not be needed until after a rezoning hearing has been successfully held; that the cart is being put before the horse.

Galiano Green is a solid, ready-to-go project, says the society. The plans were presented at an Islands Trust-sponsored Community Information Meeting to a solidly applauding audience. Head Trust Planner Robert Kojima has confirmed that the project conforms to all Islands Trust policies.

Hennessy says that for more than six years, affordable housing on Galiano has been told to take a back seat to resolving Forest zone land-use issues; the most important issue for the island. Hennessy agrees that it was the most important issue. Now there is very good news on that front (see article, page 10).

The need for affordable housing has become more urgent during that long delay. Home ownership is not the only model—however, Galiano Green is the one that has been worked on assiduously for years and is ready to go. The project has evolved to include a rental housing component as well as a home ownership component, both of which meet the definition of affordable housing.

Hennessy says that some of the people who would like to take advantage of this opportunity for a home of their own no longer dare to hope. Despite the disappointment in not having a public hearing this fall, the community would like to see the new trustees fast-track the project this winter and complete the rezoning process so that people have a chance to begin building next season. ☞

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