

“Invitation to Bowen Island Development Community to contribute to the OCP Update.”

1. Provision of affordable housing.
2. Climate change adaptation/mitigation
3. Management of construction waste and recycling of used materials
4. Retention of the Island’s landscape, specifically forested areas and habitat
5. New residential, industrial and commercial developments
6. Island transportation including car co-ops, public transport
7. Renewable energy

December 16, 2009

To; **BOWEN ISLAND OCP UPDATE STEERING COMMITTEE**

FROM; **ROGER McGILLIVRAY**

Thank-you for inviting me to express my views as a member of the “development community” on Bowen Island.

### **1. Provision of Affordable Housing**

I have been a builder of custom homes on Bowen for over 33 years, and it is my involvement in this profession that has led me to become very concerned about the lack of affordable housing and coincidentally the lack of a diversity of housing on the Island.

Building beautiful homes for clients who can afford them satisfies the creative passions of most builders of custom homes. Over the past ten years, I have been fortunate to have been asked to construct high end, large, waterfront homes, smaller “built-green platinum” homes and many average homes. It was while building the latter, I began to realize that even though these were “average” homes, they were unaffordable for average people.

One of the reasons I was attracted to Bowen Island in 1976 was the affordability. Since that time, the average wage for a worker has increased about 450% or 4-1/2 times. (From \$11 per hr. to about \$50.00 per hr.) The cost of an average lot on Bowen Island on the other hand has increased about 2300% or 23 times. (From about \$15,000 to about \$345,000) It was a struggle for me in 1976 and it is completely out of the question for an average wage earner today. It is possible to buy a home (apartment) in West Vancouver which is one of the most expensive real estate markets in Canada for less than the price of the cheapest home one can buy on Bowen Island. This is because of the diversity of housing types available in West Vancouver.

We are experience a housing crisis, a crisis where the average resident cannot afford to purchase the average house. This is not a sustainable situation. We can do little about the cost of single family lots. Their value is determined by demand, and our proximity to Vancouver will keep the demand high. Increasing the number of lots available will likely do little to reduce prices. We need to provide land for homes at cheaper prices, and we can only do this by increasing density. For most islanders the only acceptable place at the present time to increase density is close to Snug Cove. The creation of more, small single family building lots will do little to reduce housing costs. Cates Hill Village is a small lot subdivision, yet prices are very high. We need something else.

#### DIVERSITY OF HOUSING TYPES

We have been fortunate over the past several years to see multi-family housing appear at Cates Corner, Artisan Square and below the Municipal Hall. This is all rental, non-market housing, some subsidized and some not. This is a step in the right direction and we need to see more.

Virtually 100% of our market housing on Bowen is single family. This must change if we are going to introduce affordability back into market housing. We need to see high density, multi-family market housing built within or close to Snug Cove. If this housing is clustered, leaving the majority of land as green-space we will be taking a big first step towards the sustainability of our community.

#### DENSITY CALCULATION

The updated OCP should have provision for a new (for Bowen) system of calculating density. Units in a multi-family development should only count for a fraction of a single family residence. And, just as our existing OCP allows a higher density (6 to1) for seniors supportive housing\*, similar distinctions should be made for multi-family, cohousing and other lower impact housing types. \*(OCP 3.1.4.11)

Each unit in a new multi-family development will have far less impact on the environment and the community infrastructure than a single family unit. A cohousing unit will have even less impact.

## COHOUSING AND SUSTAINABILITY

Multi-family cohousing is probably the most sustainable way people can live together on Bowen or any other community in a western society.

Social Sustainability: A cohousing neighbourhood is planned and designed by the members of the community. There is no social agenda beyond the creation of a warm, respectful, supportive community where persons of different ages, family situations and financial abilities can come together to live in a healthy and stable environment.

Economic Sustainability: The development of the community is managed by the residents with no profits going to outside parties. Cohousing homes will be smaller because of the shared common facilities, and studies have shown that cohousers tend to own far fewer cars because of the shared vehicles and the ease of sharing trips. It has also been found that the percentage of home based occupations in a cohousing community is much higher than in other communities nearby.

Environmental Sustainability: -Probably the most important fundamental of cohousing is density and clustered housing, with building footprint being substantially reduced from what it would be in another community of similar population.

### Cohousing communities can:

- make much more efficient use of the land with more green space.
- consume far less because of shared amenities
- have vastly reduced carbon emissions (car sharing, efficient buildings, low or zero pollution community vehicles)
- support large community gardens
- contain neighbourhood recycling and composting systems
- design in sophisticated rainwater collection systems

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## **2. and 3. CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION/MITIGATION, MANAGEMENT OF CONSTRUCTION WASTE AND RECYCLING OF USED MATERIALS**

Bowen Island Municipality Policy #01 – 07 “Green Building Standards for Residential Rezoning” suggests that “*Applicants for rezoning are strongly encouraged to achieve the following standards for any new residential development*”

- a) *Built Green “Gold”*
- b) *Energuide 80*

These two standards address not only efficient and green building standards, but also deal with acceptable systems of construction waste management and recycling of used materials. This Municipal policy only deals with newly zoned properties and does not appear binding. An OCP Update which enforces these standards for all new construction on the island will ensure that the development and construction communities on Bowen are well informed of the standards which are expected. I will be happy to speak to the Steering Committee about “Built Green B.C.”

#### **4.Retention of the Island’s landscape, specifically forested areas and habitat.**

Encourage (or require) all new development to be clustered thus retaining as much green-space and natural land as possible. Cohousing works best for this development style.

#### **5.New residential, industrial and commercial developments.**

As mentioned above, clustered residential developments. There is probably not a big need for industrial developments however very small scale industrial (quiet) and commercial could be integrated with some new residential. Live/work?

Islanders need to recognize that some industrial works such as rock crushing, sawmilling and others related mostly to the construction industry are a “necessary evil” which all of us have benefited from at some time. Allowing or even encouraging these works in the proper locations is actually a step towards sustainability.

#### **6.Island transportation including car co-ops, public transport.**

Not so much an issue of the development community. Neighbourhoods such as Bluewater, Tunstall Bay and Hood Point could on their own develop car co-ops and car sharing. Again, a cohousing community can organize car sharing far more easily, and perhaps educate conventional communities on the concept.

Public transport. – In order for public transport to make sense, populations need to be larger. A large, heavy, diesel bus driving to Snug Cove from Bluewater every hour with only one or two passengers is not sustainable. Either, more people need to get out of their cars and use the bus or, we need a different system. Other communities use a “bus stop” where people can stand and drivers can offer them a ride. The way our road system is set up on Bowen with specific destinations, this could work very well.

## **7. Renewable Energy**

I have found over the past several years that clients are becoming far more aware of renewable energy options. Installation costs are still fairly high however, and differing options work better in different locations. (Wind, solar, geothermal) The payback times are quite long. One option for the Municipality to consider is to offer property tax reductions for a fixed period, say 5 years to help offset the initial cost of renewable energy installations. After the 5 years, the reduced cost of running the home should compensate when property taxes return to normal levels.

With costs being distributed amongst larger numbers of residents, multi-family buildings can utilize renewable energy options in more cost effective ways.

Thank-you to all of the volunteers on the OCP Steering Committee. You are putting a great deal of personal time into a very important project and I look forward to seeing the completed document,

Kind regards,

Roger McGillivray