

March 1, 2010

To:

Bowen Island OCP Steering Committee

Attention:

Sue Ellen Fast,
Chair, OCP Steering Committee

Dear Ms. Fast and members of the committee,

This letter is provided to the steering committee in support of the introduction of cohousing to Bowen Island. My wife and I are members of the Belterra Cohousing Group. We believe that a cohousing project on Bowen would not only provide benefits to the island community at large, but also offer young couples, such as ourselves, the opportunity to live on Bowen in a supportive, community setting.

Cohousing development can benefit the Bowen Island community on several fronts. First, since cohousing group members are active from the early stages of design, cohousing development can incorporate sustainable and environmentally-friendly design features that would reduce impact on the local environment and ecology. Second, lower cohousing residence pricing leads to population diversification. Cohousing prices housing units at cost and is therefore more affordable than comparable market-based housing. This opens the door to non-market units as well as providing an opportunity for young couples starting families, such as ourselves, to buy their own residence and become long-term Bowen Island residents. We believe such diversification in population is healthy for every community. Third, community-based design leads to a community-based sense of ownership, often lacking in private-owned neighbourhoods. Cohousing projects often incorporate social design features, such as shared gardens and play areas, which promote interaction among neighbours and increase joint sense of ownership and responsibility. These are some of the benefits cohousing can bring to the Bowen Island community.

As a young couple on the verge of starting a family with an interest in

community-based housing, cohousing on Bowen would provide a unique opportunity. Having grown up in smaller communities, we experienced the benefits of a strong feeling of community in a non-urban environment. We believe cohousing on Bowen can offer a strong community presence and all the subsequent benefits to young children and families. This is difficult to find in Vancouver's urban environment. Finally, as an independent consultant who works at home, being based in Bowen would be ideal as a location for a home office and in for its proximity to Vancouver.

In deciding on Bowen Island's future development plans, we hope the steering committee seriously considers cohousing, its potential to bring young families to the island and its benefits to the community at large.

Sincerely,

Itay Wand

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