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Dear members of the Bowen Island OCP Update Steering Committee:

This letter is in support of the concept of cohousing being included in the new OCP. My husband Brian Hoover and I were members for several years of a group called Island Spirit which tried to get a cohousing project going on Bowen Island. We had dozens of people interested in the idea and enough committed members of our group with the financial wherewithal to make it happen. We hired Ronaye Matthew, one of the leading experts in cohousing project management in Canada, to undertake a feasibility study for us and her conclusion was that the zoning restrictions on Bowen made the whole thing a non-starter. Our group folded up its tent when the couple who had been leading the project, Lynn Fearn and Rene Beauchamp, got tired of waiting for their dream to be realized on Bowen and left the island. They are now happily living in the Creekside Commons Cohousing community in Courtenay.

Cohousing is the most intelligent and progressive approach to developing multi-family housing that I know of. The "co" in cohousing stands for cooperation, community, and connection, all values that Bowen Islanders hold in high regard. It is unlike the standard form of land development in that the people who do the development are the ones who will ultimately live in the community. The result of the process of working together to create a development literally from the ground up is a group of people who are deeply committed to cooperative living and who understand how to create consensus. The social fabric of Bowen Island would be greatly enhanced were we to encourage more of this type of community building.

Among its many other benefits, cohousing provides ample opportunities for sharing resources and allows people to have a much smaller environmental footprint. I hope you will consider including cohousing a valid and valuable form of land / social development in the new OCP. Please feel free to call me if you wish to discuss any part of this letter with me.

Thanks for your efforts on behalf of our community.

Yours truly,

Shasta Martinuk