

MyOwnSpace Housing Society - Delegation

District of West Vancouver Council Meeting: September 12, 2011

Good evening, Mayor Goldsmith-Jones and members of Council.

Slide 1 Title Page

Slide 2 Who we are.

My name is Constance McCormick, I reside at 951 Esquimalt Avenue, West Vancouver and I represent MyOwnSpace Housing Society.

We are a registered non-profit society. As many of you know, we are a group of North Shore parents who are seeking to create semi-independent housing for our young adult children who are developmentally challenged. We are grateful to the District of West Vancouver, who for the last year, has provided us with meeting room space which allows us to refine our ideas and consider how best to achieve our goals. That is much appreciated.

It is important for us to establish safe, secure housing for our young adult children because we know that, down the road, we won't be in a position to provide the support they will always need. We're presenting to you today because we need housing for our kids and we need support from the Mayor and Council and from District of West Vancouver staff.

Slide 3 Why West Vancouver?

The District of West Vancouver has created an environment that is highly favourable to the housing and infrastructure we require. This includes such amenities as transit, shopping, services, employment, and volunteer opportunities.

Our group members all have North Shore roots and have established connections with a variety of North Shore organizations such as Special Olympics, North Shore Connexions, West Vancouver Recreation Centre, North Vancouver Recreation Commission, North Shore Neighbourhood House, Capilano University.

The District of West Vancouver can take credit for developing resources that are well-utilized by members of our group, alongside the general community. Gleneagles Golf Course and Ambleside Pitch & Putt are favourite Special Olympics golf venues. There are adapted recreation programs run by the West Vancouver Recreation Centre that have been enthusiastically attended by our group members.

The Special Education program at West Vancouver Secondary School, which is renowned for its innovative teaching program, has educated many members of our group. The WVSS program integrates the utilization of such community resources as the West Vancouver Aquatic Centre, the gym facilities at Gleneagles, and the West Vancouver Memorial Library, so our group of young adults has become well acquainted with activities located in the West Vancouver community. That program includes learning to use the “Blue Bus” system, so transit use becomes an expectation.

This is their community and it’s important to them that they continue to live in and be a part of what is familiar to them.

Creating the housing that our young adults need would be something of which West Vancouver could truly be proud.

Slide 4 Photo – Special O Walkathon

Slide 5 District of West Vancouver Housing Objectives, excerpted from the OCP.

The District of West Vancouver has recognized the need for housing for groups such as ours, as illustrated in the excerpts from the OCP – Housing Objectives.

“Support accessible and adaptable housing to meet the needs of people with physical disabilities or other special needs.”

“Support non-market housing to meet the needs of people with lower incomes.”

These quotes illustrate the District’s recognition of the need for housing for groups such as ours. Clearly, the District of West Vancouver is aware of the need to support vulnerable populations and to increase housing choices.

We want to work proactively with District of West Vancouver planning staff to achieve the non-market housing for which the District of West Vancouver has expressed support. Over the last year, members of our group have met with senior staff to explore some potential sites, and since that time, we have further refined our model and objectives.

Slide 6 Our Vision

The vision we have for our group of young people (presently about 10 in number) is to create semi-independent non-market housing. We envision locating that housing on one floor of a building within a housing development, perhaps in a high-rise, likely on a lower floor.

Each resident would occupy a TINY one-bedroom suite on the designated floor, and there would be additional communal space for making & sharing meals.

Caregiver suites, likely two in number, would be required to house support staff.

The plan as we see it would incorporate principles of inclusion, while creating a community of persons with similar abilities – sort of a community within a community.

The housing we envision must be located near transit, because taking the bus to work, recreation and other activities is crucial. This segment of the population uses transit!

It is expected that, while this housing concept is being planned now for our young people in particular, in the future it will be occupied by other individuals with similar needs.

Slide 7 Why we're here

Our purpose in appearing before you tonight is not to ask for money!

Instead, we want to be considered as a participant in a development, when a developer approaches the District of West Vancouver and begins the process of negotiating the details of a proposal.

We are hoping to work closely with community planners to develop a new and creative housing model that will minimize dependence on public funding.

Slide 8 Parting thoughts

Please be assured that we have no intention of abandoning our grown children once they have a place they can call their own. As family members, we will continue to support them in a variety of ways, for as long as we are able.

The housing we seek to create must be in close proximity to transit, as well as shopping, recreation, services, and employment and volunteering opportunities. It is imperative that they stay in their community where they have established critical bonds and familiarity, where they contribute to their community and will continue to do so. A location along the Marine Drive corridor, in Park Royal, Ambleside or Dundarave neighbourhoods – somewhere accessible - would meet those requirements.

Several of our young adult children are here tonight, seated in the gallery. They are here as observers.

Thank you for your time and attention. Please feel free to contact us at:

MyOwnSpace Housing Society

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