

Vesanto Melina, speaker #3, Cohousing Rezoning Application

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. I am a 3rd generation Vancouverite yet I chose to live in the first cohousing community in Canada, which is situated in Langley, and have enjoyed WindSong for 16 years. I moved there from an apartment where I felt far more isolated.

Cohousing gives me the opportunity to learn to live in harmony with others, including people with different beliefs and values. Cohousers typically work at gaining these skills. Here is a group, including many beyond WindSong, doing a training in communication. I treasure this aspect of cohousing.

I love living in a multigenerational community. My grandson lives 5 hours away and thus our visits are infrequent --yet I get to enjoy the grandmother experience with other little friends—these 3 came by to sing me their song. A neighbour boy knocks on my door for a morning hug on his way to school. His grandmothers live far away from him.

I value the multicultural aspect of cohousing. Our Vancouver group includes people with Japanese, Chinese, Mongolian, Mexican, and African heritage, and we welcome more of this diversity.

A huge benefit is that cohousing allows for an economical way to live. We can share garden tools, cars—I don't even need to own a car--, bicycles, books, community meals that happen several times a week, and expertise. Someone will help me with my computer and I will help them with their recipe. Our internet is \$6 a month because it is based on a shared system. This is the most environmentally responsible way I have found to live, because of the sharing of resources and the recycling. WindSong won a gold Georgie Award from the Canadian Home Builders Association for "Best Environmental Achievement" and the Urban Development Institute's 1996 Environmental and Energy Award for excellence in urban development.

It is a socially responsible way to live and a healthy way to go into the senior years.

I don't have to own a *big* house. When my grandson and family come to visit, we can use the shared indoor and outdoor play areas. I can book the guest room, or a larger area in the common house for a social event, or use the multipurpose room when I want to exercise. My partner and I can build or repair furniture in the workshop in the common house.

We do projects together. People help each other out a lot. Sixteen years ago, 5 neighbours, including 2 I didn't know, loaned me enough that with what I had I could get a down payment. When I have trouble with my hip, one or other neighbour is willing to pick up groceries for me when *they* shop. If someone is ill, we post a calendar and any family who wants to, signs up for a turn to make an extra portion of dinner and takes it over.

I love Vancouver more than any other city in the world. The best birthday present I could imagine for my 71st birthday, which is tomorrow, is to know that I could move back into Vancouver, because it is so affordable in this context, *and* live in cohousing!

Thank you!

Vesanto Melina,

5.22(1) Personal and Confidential