

# Microhousing Victoria Society



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Rob Woodland  
Director of Legislative and Regulatory Services  
City of Victoria  
1 Centennial Square  
Victoria, BC V8W 1P6

Dear Rob,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide an update on the status of our group. We have made significant progress in readying our organization to work with the City of Victoria on a microhousing project. As we believe this report will demonstrate, the idea of a microhousing community in Victoria has inspired a great deal of action across a diverse constituency in a short amount of time. We thought it might be helpful to begin with a brief history of our group.

After the May 11th Town Hall meeting at City Hall where Mark Lakeman and Andrew Heben made their microhousing presentations, a group of interested citizens began to meet to help organize a project in Victoria inspired by Dignity Village in Portland and Opportunity Village in Eugene, Oregon. Our first gathering was May 19th at which we struck an open Steering Committee. We have been meeting on an almost weekly basis in the two months since then. Thus far over 38 people have attended our meetings.

Through our discussions, it became apparent we needed to incorporate as a not for profit society. We also wanted to have an open policy so that all members of the community would be welcome to participate and have a voice in the development of the project, especially people with lived experiences of homelessness. Since the more formal structure of a not for profit could put limits on the kind of participation we envisioned, we decided to create a two-part structure: we would incorporate our group under the Societies Act of British Columbia, and we would plan our project through an open consensus model of community organization.

On July 2nd, 2015 *MicroHousing Victoria* was incorporated. In turn it empowered the *Solidarity Village Steering Committee* with the planning and development of Victoria's first microhousing community. We developed an Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Society and our Steering Committee that outlines membership and how these two key groups will interact with each other to provide development, direction and management to Solidarity Village. We are establishing banking services with VanCity Credit Union #42 and have obtained the services of a bookkeeper who will assist us in developing and managing financial tracking and reporting measures. Additionally, we are in negotiation with a small housing society to partner with us on project grants and provide financial oversight for Microhousing Victoria until we have established a record of sound fiscal management and are able to apply to granting agencies on our own behalf.

Several working groups or subcommittees have emerged to help steward the development of Solidarity Village. The Community Outreach subcommittee has been actively engaging members of our community who are currently homeless asking for their input on the project. We have made presentations explaining microhousing and how it might be developed in Victoria



to groups at Our Place, Rock Bay Landing, Sandy Merriman House, and The Mustard Seed. We have been asked to come back for further presentations so other people who are homeless may learn about the proposed village. In addition, we have developed a survey to help us better understand the needs and priorities of our potential residents. Their input is essential in our decision making process. We look forward to continuing this participatory process as we develop the design and governance policies for Solidarity Village with our potential residents.

The Design/Build subcommittee has been similarly active in working through ideas about the physical design of the Village and the housing units. In addition to receiving input from the Community Outreach efforts, we have been meeting with interested parties in the community and have made contact with both Stewart Wheeler from Victoria High School and Albert Van Akker from Camosun about the assistance the carpentry programs in both schools can provide to the village. Quentin Verhaegen, a member of the subcommittee, negotiated with “Victoria Harbor Ferry” to allow us to use their workshop in order to construct prototypes for the housing units. In the last two weeks we have undertaken the first iteration of model plans for the village. In response to the input thus far, two plans have been produced: one more urban in nature and the other with a more suburban character. Furthermore, at our last Steering Committee meeting on July 12th, we opened the process of envisioning site requirements and preliminary design needs for Solidarity Village to the entire Steering committee.

In addition we have just empaneled the Financial subcommittee to facilitate fundraising activities such as grant writing and soliciting donations. This group will also head up our application for charitable status, an endeavor which was unanimously approved by the Steering Committee and Society and which is slated to begin next week.

We soon expect to have our preliminary site requirements sufficiently focused to begin the process of identifying possible sites, and we look forward to working with City representatives to streamline that process as much as possible. Further, we would like to discuss the process for accessing project development funds for assistance in defining Village requirements and site needs. We are currently seeking options for a grant to build a prototype micro home to assess feasibility of our preferred four/eight-panel design.

We look forward to meeting with you in the near future as our plans for Solidarity Village progress.

Most sincerely, on behalf of the Board of Directors,

Kristina Leach,  
Microhousing Victoria Society

Attached: Info-sheet, Constitution, MOU, and Survey



## **Information Sheet for MicroHousing Victoria / Solidarity Village**

### **Solidarity Village Mission Statement:**

Solidarity Village Victoria is a grassroots community development initiative working in collaboration between housed and unhoused community members toward the creation and stewardship of low-cost, democratically-managed, peer support microhousing villages for people experiencing homelessness, those at risk of homelessness and low-income housed people seeking a more affordable and communal way of life.

### **Microhousing Victoria Constitution:**

PDF attached to email

### **Founding Board of MicroHousing Victoria:**

*Bobby Arbess*, Mitraniketan Housing Co-op, Casa Maria Emergency Housing Society, owner and operator 2nd Nature Landscaping, acting Solidarity Village Coordinator

*Graeme Bristol*, human rights architect, community development professional, founder Center for Architecture and Human Rights ( Victoria/Bangkok), Solidarity Village Design and Build Working Group

*Todd Crouse*, builder, community development worker, living homeless, Rock Bay Landing, Solidarity Village Design/Build Working Group

*Peter Gould*, Lived experiences of homelessness.

*Bernice Kamano*, Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness, Outreach worker. Bernice was a founding member of the M' Akola group of societies.

*Kristina Leach*, MArch, MSc in Architecture and PhD in Architectural History from the University of Michigan, formerly Director of Physical Development, Women's Research and Development Center, a not-for-profit devoted to the creation of mixed income communities in Cincinnati, Ohio.

*Hilary Marks*, lived homelessness, Committee to End Homelessness, Homeless outreach and inclusion.

*Trudy Norman*, Phd(c), PMP. Interdisciplinary Doctoral Candidate (Nursing/Anthropology), University of Victoria, Center for Addictions Research of BC. Researcher. Thirty years experience working with people with lived experience of homelessness.

*Al Reford*, Social justice activist, Legacy Housing Trust Fund

### **MOU between MicroHousing Victoria and Solidarity Village Steering Committee:**

PDF attached to email

### **Solidarity Village Draft Survey:**

PDF attached to email