



Date: November 9, 2015

Andrea Hudson
City of Victoria
1 Centennial Square
Victoria, BC V8W 1P6

Dear Ms. Hudson,

As per our conversations last week I would like to provide you with the following brief update as to MicroHousing Victoria's recent activities. Please feel free to share this information with Council and your colleagues at the City.

As you know, MicroHousing Victoria was formed in response to the extraordinary housing initiatives being undertaken by the City to address both housing affordability and the homelessness emergency felt throughout Greater Victoria. While it has been acknowledged by many already, one point emerging from that work bears repeating: no one housing solution is appropriate for everyone. A range of options is necessary. We are confident that our vision of micro-housing not only offers one of these, but that it is an option that is as inspiring as it is transformative. Following is a brief update on progress made to date:

1. Consultation with potential micro-housing residents

- **Collected and analyzed over 50 surveys** of people currently experiencing homelessness to identify their housing needs and priorities.
- **Conducted 7 focus group sessions with people using services** at Our Place, Rock Bay Landing, the Mustard Seed and Sandy Merriman House.
- **Conducted one focus group with a cross section of 30 stakeholders** to identify a "wish list" for site and design criteria. Participants included professionals, social justice and housing advocates, people with lived-experience of homelessness, students and other residents of Victoria identified through the Oregon micro-housing presentation at City Hall in May of this year.

2. Design Developments

MicroHousing Victoria has engaged *Waymark Architecture* to help concretize the vision for micro-housing developed to date through its inclusion and consultation efforts. The architects have already:

- **Synthesized** inclusion survey and consultation results.
- **Balanced** identified housing needs for safety, privacy and dignity of residents with currently understood societal expectations that residents in Victoria have for their neighbourhoods.

- **Produced a schematic design:** The design is as radical as it is familiar. What we propose is a very carefully laid out and constructed house. Each house can accommodate 4 to 6 residents, and depending on the site, can be arranged in a single pod configuration, or as a duplex (2 pods), triplex (3 pods) or even quad (4 pods).

The result is nothing like the US model shown to us in May, but instead is a solution tailored to Greater Victoria, its land, its climate and its citizenry. Benefits of this design include:

- **A minimum set of amenities including:** fully insulated and heated spaces, electricity and a private, secure fridge to store personal food.
- **A very light footprint:** One of the beauties of our design is that it will sit lightly on any site. By choosing to leverage the quality and economies of pre-fabrication, our bed/sitting modules are easily made mobile, and the kitchen/bath unit requires only detachment from city services (plumbing, electrical, water etc.) to be similarly moved. This allows for more flexibility in site selection. Sites can be permanently acquired, but they can also be leased, leaving sites improved with city hook-ups.
- **Flexibility to begin small:** This design allows each micro-housing project to begin small to ensure smooth operation and integration into each neighbourhood, with the option of adding housing pods to maximize use of each site based on funding availability and considering Victoria's neighbourhood planning priorities
- **Responsive to the challenge of self-management:** The concept of self-managed communities has been of central importance to the development of our micro-housing concept. MicroHousing Victoria is currently working with a group of potential residents and those with lived-experience of homelessness to develop a self-management model. Our design concept supports people to live cooperatively in small groups. Then, depending on the size of the site, self-management extends to cooperation among housing pods. Our self-management model is characterized by:
 - Cooperation within the household pod
 - Cooperation among housing pods
 - Neighbourliness (feeling of mutual acceptance and friendliness) within neighbourhoods..

That said, there is nothing inherent in the design that requires self-management. Depending on the site and the governance arrangements, this style of housing can be adapted to fit anywhere on the housing continuum, depending on the level of supports required and provided to residents.

- **Potential for adding neighbourhood amenities:** We are hopeful that an integral and cooperative relationship may develop with each neighbourhood, and that such improvements might grow to include a new and sought-after amenity, such as a community kitchen, a meeting room, or other desired improvement, depending on the size of the site and identified neighbourhood needs.
- **Low cost structure:** We are still in the early stages of design, where we are considering all green building options. For the purposes of this report only, and based on the use of prefabricated structures, each housing pod (housing 4 to 6 residents each) is estimated to be in the range of \$120,000 to 150,000 (including soft and hard costs, without land or support services), depending on the specifics of the site and other factors, at an average cost of \$30,000 per resident.

4. Consultation with Community Associations

The process that has led to this design has been one dedicated to inclusion of those who might live in this form of housing and consultation with design/build professionals, housing advocates and those with lived- experience of homelessness. In addition to continuing these inclusion efforts throughout the micro-housing development process, we are excited to begin sharing our vision with Victoria's communities. We have a meeting scheduled in March with the Victoria Community Association Network (VCAN). We have also reached out to individual community associations and have received positive responses from seven, so far, that are interested in learning more about our micro-housing project. We are currently in the process of scheduling meetings with these associations in November, December, January and February with: Fernwood (Presentation confirmed for November 18, 2015), Oaklands, James Bay, Fairfield Gonzales (Presentation confirmed for December 7, 2015), North Park, Hillside-Quadra (Presentation confirmed for December 7, 2015), and Burnside Gorge. Our goal in approaching the community associations directly is to further the conversation about micro-housing in Victoria in order to continue to refine our vision through a collaborative process and to request their assistance in identifying potential sites.

5. Proposed Development timeline: Summer of 2016 for installation of first housing pod

We are proposing this aggressive timeline to have our first micro-housing pilot up and running in order to begin addressing the housing emergency we are facing in Victoria.

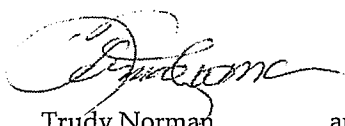
6. Site selection

Most importantly, we must now find our first site. Our quest for a site has taken on renewed urgency. To initiate our first pilot site by the summer of 2016, we need to settle on our first site within the next 3 months, but we are hopeful that progress towards this goal will come from our community association meetings and our work with the City and potential private and public sector landowners.

Our confidence stems from our belief in the process of inclusion. Although we are just beginning to reach out to community associations, our design has already received input from many of Victoria's residents. The extremely flexible sizing of our design comes, in part, from their voices. The potentials are great, and as our progress thus far has demonstrated, by listening carefully and collaborating extensively with stakeholders, our project will continue to grow into something truly grass roots, community-friendly and innovative.

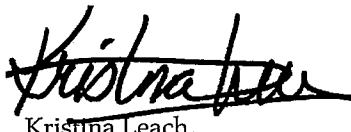
We hope this update of our activities is useful to you, and if we can be of any further assistance please don't hesitate to contact us.

Most sincerely, on behalf of the Board of Directors,



Trudy Norman
MicroHousing Victoria

and



Kristina Leach,

EN: House Plan for MicroHousing Victoria Pilot Project

