



The Anchorage

L'Arche Comox Valley

October 25, 2023

Dear Mayor and Members of the City Council:

L'Arche Comox Valley's latest project is to build housing for adults with diverse abilities who can live independently with some supports.

In the Comox Valley's housing market, there are increasingly limited housing options for adults with diverse abilities who can live independently. Furthermore, studies show that often paid staff are the only relationships people have outside of family members. L'Arche Comox Valley (LCV) provides support for people to achieve greater independence while being part of the integrated community. LCV also provides a conduit to other parts of society.

Modelled on the successful I Belong Centre Suites (IBC Suites) (LCV owned and operated) project, the Anchorage will provide seven one-bedroom units with full kitchens and in-suite laundry in Phase 1. An additional similar eight one bedroom suites are planned for Phase 2.

A *Good Friend & Neighbour* living onsite provides oversight for safety and fosters community. An amenity space and a large common patio for larger gatherings further supports the intention of building community.

The breakdown of the units is as follows:

- Phase 1 - seven one bedroom units + one unit for *Good Friend & Neighbour*
- Phase 2 – eight one bedroom units

In Phase 1, five units and four units in Phase 2 units are wheelchair accessible. The average unit size is 500 sq ft/unit.

The cost of \$3.5M (Phase 1) includes site and services preparation for both phases.

To keep the rent comparable and affordable with those at the IBC Suites, the budget has been built on charging rent of \$800 per suite which is considerably below the market value of a one bedroom suite in the Comox ValleyN (\$1,700 and upward). Should this project receive funding through BC Housing's Community Housing Fund, the rents may have to be adjusted

to meet their rent structure requirements. However, people with an intellectual disability have limited financial resources so the rents need to be affordable. There will need to be a discussion with BC Housing as to the viability of charging market rents for some of the suites. Utilities are included as part of the rent.

The more options, the better! LCV seeks to expand the housing choices for adults with diverse abilities, particularly those who desire to live independently from family and have the capacity to learn the skills required for living on their own. Successfully managing this transition to independence can have many positive impacts for these individuals as LCV has seen with the tenant population at the IBC Suites.

A home of one's own allows the individual to craft a life of their own. Friends and family can come for dinner, one can choose what and when to eat, lock the door when one wants to be alone, and most importantly, be part of an anchoring neighbourhood where one is recognized and known.

There are currently twenty-seven people who have submitted their name for a suite at The Anchorage. This is before any public announcement.

The presence of a *Good Friend & Neighbour* is the key element to the success of this model of housing. This is a full-time paid role, assumed by an individual who lives on-site, acting as a resource for tenants, working to create a sense of community, supporting individuals to engage with others in activities in the local area, monitoring the flow of life on the property for safety and security concerns and responding to emergencies. The Anchorage is "housing plus": safe, secure, and supported.

Embedded in a small-city neighbourhood made up of single family homes and small-scale apartment complexes, the Anchorage will benefit from the existing neighbourhood identity and ethos. The Anchorage is sited close to schools, churches, bus routes and civic amenities. The walkability score is high! And it will also form part of the LCV 'campus' that includes *Jubilee House*, a L'Arche group home, 3 1/2 blocks south; the *I Belong Centre*, LCV's community hub; and *IBC Suites*, six units of affordable housing, in the same building 1/2 block north.

The Anchorage will be home to individuals who meet the following criteria:

- have an existing funding agreement with CLBC in order to live semi-independently based on an assessment for these skills
- desire to live independently of family, and are supported in their choice by family and friends

- possess, or are able to readily acquire the necessary skills for daily living and are able to live alone safely with some supports. (Assessment tools to evaluate tenant readiness is in development.)
- are able to access transportation
- desire to be part of an intentional community, developing friendships and participating in group activities

L'Arche Comox Valley will provide:

- well-designed, well-constructed housing that is energy efficient and well-maintained
- a safe and secure environment
- rental fees that include all utilities (excluding cable services)
- a *Good Friend & Neighbour*, who is a full-time employee of LCV, resident on site to provide strategic assistance and oversight
- inclusive community, supported by weekly and monthly social events
- engagement with the wider community, its members, activities and networks
- tenancy until such a time as a person is unable to manage the demands of independent living

L'Arche Comox Valley is in full agreement with the goals set out in the Courtenay's Official Community Plan. The vision of the Anchorage and several of those identified in the City's plan align:

- Investing in relationships is at the heart of this project because that is fundamental to how L'Arche operates.
- Housing choices for all is the purpose of this project. As stated earlier, people with intellectual disabilities are an often forgotten group in our society.
- Land is a precious resource. By creating this village setting eighteen people will find a home and their families will be at peace.
- The people who live in The Anchorage will also contribute to a healthier and strong neighbourhood just as those who live at the IBC Suites do today.

L'Arche is a non-profit charity. The 3.5 million dollars to build this project is being raised by community volunteers. We are requesting for a reduction of the DCC fees and financial relief for all off site servicing. Being relieved of the costs of repaving the laneway and sidewalk will help us achieve our financial goal more quickly. The risk is that the cost of these other expenses may jeopardize the project. Given our charitable status and the

challenge of raising the cost of building, we ask that the City exempt us from this work and these expenses.

With the approval of this project, Courtenay displays its commitment to the goal of being a city for everyone.

Respectfully,
Hollie Card, Executive Director
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