

Denman Housing Association

Registered Charity #84680 0936 RR0001

Directors' Report to 2019 AGM

Before updating Members on the past year's activities, we would like to briefly refresh memories on the origins of the Denman Green project.

Talked about for decades, I have been told as far back as the 1970's, the affordable housing need on Denman has clearly been a chronic challenge, one which a group of us in 2012 decided to try and resolve.

The project started with a Housing Needs Study in November 2013 that showed up to 120 people, including 20 children, in need of acceptable or affordable housing or both. Our 2013 study was validated by one commissioned by Islands Trust in June 2018 that concluded, "Denman Island now requires up to 80 affordable housing units." So clearly the need was there.

The first hurdle was land, because without it the best of intentions are just talk. As we all know land is expensive and there is no public land. For 6 years we looked, we made several diverse & imaginative offers to the Elks, for some of the Elkhaven land. We approached several landowners, but for a variety of reasons, none felt inclined to donate. In all nine properties were considered & proposals of different kinds made. No luck. Until finally in late 2017 a deal emerged. The release, in effect a donation, of densities from one property and their transfer to another, which upon completion would result in title to 20 acres being transferred to Denman Housing Association for the construction of the much needed affordable housing. As we go through the exhausting process of rezoning, subdivision & all that entails, it is important that we not forget the unique circumstances that brought land to the Denman Green project. Unique, and therefore unlikely to be replicated.

In January 2018 the density swap/land deal became a three way Agreement of Intent and in July of that year we received Project Development Funding from BC Housing which enabled us to start work preparatory to a rezoning Application to Islands Trust. This was sent in on October 1 2018 and has now therefore been in process for over sixteen months.

Which brings us to today. Currently four bylaws have been given their first reading. Bylaw 235 amends the OCP, enabling the density transfer mentioned above;

requiring Energy Step Code in the building construction; rezoning the receiver parcel to allow for the addition of 4 densities; and zoning the affordable housing parcel to ensure the housing is affordable in perpetuity. Bylaw 236 amends the Land Use Bylaw, rezoning the donor parcel to reduce permitted densities/dwellings; rezoning the receiver parcel & Denman Green lot; and stipulating the Denman Green lot coverage and other land use parameters. Bylaw 237 & 238 amend the OCP & LUB to enable the designation of a new Development Permit Area for the receiver parcel & Denman Green lot. The new DPA Guidelines relate primarily to protection of the environment before & after construction, designating no-build areas, establishing a vegetative buffer on all boundaries, requiring a qualified professional report that building design incorporates features to reduce water & energy consumption, improve thermal comfort, air quality and more.

In conjunction with our primary objective of meeting, in part, the affordable housing needs of the Denman community, we are also committed to making Denman Green a model of sustainability.

Subject always to BC Housing, our funder's, approval, our current house designs are for 4 fourplexes (each unit containing 4 dwellings), 1 duplex and 2 studio apartments above a common laundry/general use facility, in all 6 buildings. Four of the 10 X 1 bed units will be wheelchair accessible. In addition there will be 6 X 2 bed and 4 X 3 bed units. All buildings will be constructed to meet Energy Step Code 4, meaning they will be significantly more energy-efficient than most modern structures.

Our intent is for Denman Green to be net zero in energy consumption, in other words to generate as much energy as it consumes. Hakai Energy of Cumberland has completed a solar energy study & costing. Connected to BC Hydro via a net metering arrangement this will pay for itself & achieve our net zero goal.

As most know, the well we drilled was dry. The hydrogeologist whom we then consulted reviewed relevant geological data & concluded, "that drilling another well within the proposed subdivision boundaries has a low chance of success". So we took the next logical step and began to research rainwater harvesting on a multi-family dwelling scale. And the more we learned, the more we asked ourselves why it had not been the logical first step. Because of course there are thousands of households in B.C. alone living comfortably with rainwater as their sole source of water.

Meeting the needs of Denman Green is simply a matter of scale.

The UBC Chapter of Engineers for a Sustainable World, with whom we are working, is designing a Pilot rainwater collection & treatment system that will demonstrate how Denman Green's future water can be reliably treated to Canadian Drinking Water Standards. Comprehensive rainwater tests have already shown this is easily achievable.

The counterbalance to sustainable delivery being conservative usage, the fittings & devices in the Denman Green dwellings will be low-flow & water efficient.

'Proficiency' toilets @ only 3 litres per flush will use greywater recycled from showers & basins. The common laundry, a standard economic feature of multi-family dwellings, will use untreated rainwater in machines consuming 31.5 litres per load.

Dishwashers will be installed because, at 11 litres per load, they use much less water than hand washing. Finally there will be a significant water reserve that will exceed the no-rain days predicted by climatologists for this part of B.C.

Rounding off the subject of water, we will install tankage for firefighting, per the Fire Chief's specifications; while water for outdoor use, gardening & such will come from a dug pond.

As with everything, there has to be balance, in this case between creating a pleasant living environment and clearing as little land as possible.

We have submitted a Site Plan to BC Housing, asking for approval by the time of the Community Information Meeting now being planned by Islands Trust.

Meanwhile we do know there will be a 30m vegetative buffer or setback on all sides of the property and that the maximum lot coverage of all buildings & structures will be 10%. The Environmental Impact Study of the Denman Green site, prepared by Current Environmental in Courtenay, points to there being an opportunity to create a meadow habitat, where tree clearance is needed, by planting native grasses which are known to support species such as the Taylor's Checkerspot Butterfly. The Study recommends other mitigation measures such as thinning the second growth to encourage habitat diversity and the placing of a no-build covenant on undeveloped areas, all of which we support & intend to follow.

So far we have over 40 names of persons interested in making Denman Green their home. This is not a waiting list. Prospective tenants must first qualify with BC Housing and be placed on the Housing Registry. This involves disclosing income & assets and an assessment of the applicant's ability to uphold the

obligations of a tenancy agreement. Once on the Registry, and because Denman Green cannot accommodate all who qualify, certain criteria will have to be applied, such as length of Denman residency, whether there are children in the family, or a need for accessible accommodation & more. It will not be an easy task, one that we will delegate, one that must be seen to be transparent and fair.

Our Association has been working on this now for over 6 years and the likelihood is that it will take at least two more before Denman Green is ready for occupancy. But we believe it is worth it. Not only does a broad demographic enrich our community, but it is essential if the volunteer-driven organizations that do so much on the island are to carry on & thrive; essential if the fairs, dances, creation of arts & crafts, the school, the growing & selling of produce are to continue. Above all it is arguably the responsibility of a civilized, caring community that it refuses to allow friends & neighbours, including children, to live in sub-standard, unaffordable housing.