

Cohabitat Wakefield hopes to have land this year

Thanks to support group eyes land near Wakefield roundabout

By Stuart Benson

Cohabitat Wakefield's goal of constructing 30 affordable, cooperative housing units is another step closer to being realized, thanks to the support of the municipality and an additional \$25,000 in funding from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

"We're so grateful for the support of the municipality, as well as the funding," Cohabitat Wakefield member and Chelsea resident

Mary Granskou told The Low Down, referring to the \$15,000 from La Pêche municipal Green Fund the organization received on Sept. 5, 2020. This was in addition to the funds received from the FCM.

Cohabitat Wakefield launched as a group in 2015 and comprises seven founding members including: Louise Chatelain, Arleen Prost, Lenny Prost, Jacques Rousseau, Diane Villemure, Pat Cummings, and Francine Costa.

The group's vision is to create a vibrant and cohesive community of approximately 30 housing units that would be affordable, multi-generational, and environmentally-sustainable.

In April 2017, Cohabitat Wakefield was incorporated as a non-profit, solidarity cooperative, meaning future tenants will collectively act as the owners of the real estate.

Granskou explained that the organization was still in a "conceptual stage," which required funding to study energy and design options in order to achieve their goal of being a net-positive energy and food producing "community-within-a-community." Granskou explained that that would mean designing a community that produces more energy than it consumes and more vegetables than they eat, and how to share the surplus.

The organization will also need to hire an architect to draft

a design sketch of what the community will look like, none of which will be cheap.

"Our intention is to approach the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation as well," Granskou said. "They have a major affordable housing fund."

"I've been dreaming of living in a community like this for a long time," said Granskou, who has lived in Chelsea for the past 15 years. "We're very focused on the land question and we hope that we will have it this year."

Granskou also expressed the organization's gratitude towards La Pêche councillor Claude Giroux, specifically for his support of the project, including working as a liaison between the municipality and the National

Capital Commission in order to acquire a parcel of land for the organization.

Giroux said he had been in communication with the NCC to acquire on behalf of the municipality a parcel of land on Chemin de la Vallée de Wakefield just before the roundabout — a portion of which would be provided to Cohabitat to construct their 30 residences.

As of now, Cohabitat Wakefield has 54 members, many of whom are residents of Wakefield with an interest in actually living in the cooperative once it has been built. If you are interested in supporting Cohabitat Wakefield or would like more information, you can contact the group at welcome@cohabitat-wakefield.ca.