

COHABITAT WAKEFIELD

pour un mode de vie durable ✨ for a sustainable way of life

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

In the current social, environmental and economic context, collective commitment is undoubtedly the most appropriate weapon to rally the agents of change and meet the challenges of tomorrow.

~ Patrick Duguay, Directeur général de CDROL

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1. HISTORY AND RAISON D'ÊTRE

Driven by a desire to establish a socially cohesive¹ multigenerational housing community in Wakefield, a group started meeting in 2016. One of the first steps of our journey was to develop a vision statement that speaks to our commitment to the quality of life we value:

WE ENVISION A HARMONIOUS WORLD WHERE WE CONSCIOUSLY EVOLVE THROUGH AUTHENTIC CONNECTIONS IN COMPASSIONATE AND FUN-LOVING COMMUNITIES.

As is the case for any new housing development, its realisation must harmonise with the collective interest of the locality. Fortunately, the interests expressed by the residents, the community groups, the business community and the Municipality of La Pêche were already documented in the *Special Planning Program – Sector of Wakefield*. The ensuing "development vision"² reflects a wide consensus on the expectations and aspirations of the community for the

future development of the village core. Similarly, our mission statement is aligned with the broad principles shaping the future development of the Wakefield sector:

WE ASPIRE TO BECOME THE CHANGE WE WISH TO SEE IN THE WORLD BY MODELING A SOCIALLY, ENVIRONMENTALLY AND ECONOMICALLY SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY.

Our housing project subscribes to the sustainable development³ perspective with its three pillars: social equity, preservation of the environment and responsible economic activity. Applied at the scale of a neighbourhood, a review of best practices indicates that increasing the availability of adequate and affordable housing is the most far-reaching component of moving towards an equitable, sustainable society⁴. The founding members have selected the “housing cooperative”⁵ model as the best approach to create access to affordable housing with the benefits of community life, collective facilities and shared resources. **Cohabitat Wakefield** was incorporated in April 2017 as a non-profit solidarity cooperative in housing⁶ with four main orientations:

- To offer affordable⁷, energy efficient rental housing adapted to the needs of members, regardless of age, race, socio-economic status, nationality, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, family status, disability or religion⁸.
- To ensure a supportive living environment focused on the values and principles defined in the charter⁹.
- To establish multifunctional indoor and outdoor spaces for community life.
- To contribute to neighbouring communities by sharing practices, services, resources, knowledge and skills.

By increasing the inventory of affordable long-term rentals in Wakefield, our project becomes an asset for a municipality confronted¹⁰ with a surge of landlords converting their property from long-term to short-term rental for financial gain. Consequently, the municipal council of La Pêche resolved in February 2019 to collaborate with **Cohabitat Wakefield** in the unfolding of the project¹¹.

2. “ECO-NEIGHBOURHOOD” CONCEPT

In the spirit of *“becoming the change we wish to see in the world”* and in response to the myriad facets of a sustainable way of life, the main characteristics of this innovative project indicate our willingness to lead by example. This is why **Cohabitat Wakefield** aims to be an example of an “eco-neighbourhood”¹² where social¹³ and functional¹⁴ diversity will cohabitate. As a living environment designed to meet the objectives of sustainable development, an eco-neighbourhood *“ensures the quality of life of its residents and makes it possible to considerably*

reduce the use of resources (natural, energy, financial) during the construction phase and by the lifestyle of its habitants.”¹⁵

2.1 LIVING, REGENERATIVE AND ADAPTIVE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Located¹⁶ near local services and public transportation, our eco-neighbourhood will combine green spaces, community gardens, common facilities and up to 32 dwellings in small multi-unit buildings¹⁷ arranged in a cluster.

Inspired by regenerative design¹⁸ projects and the “Living Building Challenge”¹⁹ program, our housing co-op is committed to integrating a range of sustainable design strategies for a built environment conducive to health and accessibility, to community interactions, and to a net-positive impact on the environment.²⁰

2.1.1 User Comfort and Quality of Life

Since housing is undeniably linked to health and well-being²¹, the project intends to:

- use healthy materials with no or low VOC (volatile organic compounds) emissions
- respect the principles of universal design,^{22,23} the features recommended in “Habitat Ami Des Aînés”²⁴, and the accessibility requirements set by the municipality or the National Energy Code for Buildings
- configure dwellings as dual aspect²⁵ units in order to:
 - make the most of natural light and allow views of the outside with opening windows on both ends or sides (for corner units)
 - allow good natural aeration and cross-ventilation for better indoor air quality
- fit window overhangs for maximum shade in summer and maximum sunshine in winter
- provide outdoor access: a covered balcony for upper floor units and a porch²⁶ for ground floor units
- maximise soundproofing

2.1.2 Multifunctional Spaces

As a mixed-use eco-neighbourhood, the co-op will provide green spaces and shared facilities designed to:

- promote encounters and spontaneous interactions
- provide covered space to park cars and bicycles and to store large items
- accommodate gatherings and meetings

- invite solitary contemplation
- share meals together periodically
- receive social and cultural activities
- accommodate economic activities linked to the functional mix
- welcome cooperatives, community organisations or private companies wishing to develop a relationship with [Cohabitat Wakefield](#)

2.1.3 Eco-responsible Performance

Accompanied by experts, we will explore many measures to reduce the ecological footprint of the project, including:

- minimizing the impact of development on the natural environment with the construction of prefabricated buildings
- recovering rainwater and reclaiming grey water for automatic irrigation of landscape and gardens
- upcycling²⁷ waste and by-products
- preserving and enhancing the biodiversity of natural environments
 - aiming for net-positive energy consumption by focusing on:
 - optimization of energy efficiency and conservation measures, including a building envelope which exceeds Novoclimat’s energy performance specifications²⁸ by being super-insulated with effective air and moisture control
 - passive solar energy by orienting buildings according to solar gain and shade and the use of passive solar collectors to heat air²⁹ and water
 - conforming energy generation measures to Hydro Quebec’s standards in order to benefit from its net metering option

We foresee a phased implementation to maintain affordability while improving the performance, resiliency and scalability of solutions in light of changing needs and circumstances.

2.2 PRIORITY GROUPS AND SOCIAL MIX

One of the National Housing Strategy (NHS) priority areas for action³⁰ is housing for the most vulnerable Canadians. Undeniably, access to adequate and affordable housing is a foundation which disadvantaged groups depend upon for their economic and social vitality.

The general observation that emerged from consultations with various associations and community organisations is that the primary groups in need of affordable rental housing in the

Municipality of La Pêche are seniors, young adults (with or without children) and people with disability.

Although the project does not explicitly target the full range of vulnerable populations identified by the NHS³¹, we recognise that the compounding effects of multiple grounds of discrimination exacerbate the difficulties faced by people who are part of more than one disadvantaged or marginalised group³². Against this backdrop, **Cohabitat Wakefield** intends to become a social “mosaic”³³ as a counterbalance to marginalisation. To this end, we are in the process of developing measures to create and support the conditions favourable to ongoing inclusion³⁴, belonging, participation, recognition and solidarity. In particular:

- values defined in our charter to cultivate openness of heart and mind with good-will, trust and respect
- compassionate communication to enhance listening, improve mutual understanding, and resolve conflict quickly and equitably³⁵
- community meals to promote neighbourly relations
- (un)learning opportunities to raise awareness, inspire, mobilise, and deepen the understanding and experience of “becoming the change we wish to see in the world”
- formal selection and integration procedures to specify the expectations, requirements and path to resident membership
- partnerships with pertinent organisations and associations to accompany and support vulnerable members³⁶

2.3 FOOD HUB NEIGHBOURHOOD AND FUNCTIONAL MIX

Without losing sight of the cornerstone of a “highly desirable community”³⁷ (that is to say, housing), we intend to optimise the use of our common facilities and land for the following interdependent purposes:

- To finance the design, construction, maintenance, improvement and renewal of infrastructure.
- To stimulate the emergence of a complementary, partnership-oriented functional mix.
- To put into practice the cooperative principle “Concern for Community” of the *International Cooperative Alliance*³⁸:

“Co-operatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies approved by their members.”

In order to evolve a functional mix focused on complementary and local partnerships, initiatives will be selected according to the following guidelines:

- Members can, in accordance with “decision-making by consent”³⁹, raise objections to a proposal based on established evaluation criteria⁴⁰.
- Stakeholders need to demonstrate openness to authentic relationships with the various players involved in the “co-production”⁴¹ of a functional mix.
- Goods and services need to complement or diversify the existing local offer, as a result of cooperation or consensus between all parties concerned.
- Initiators of a collective entrepreneurship project could be assisted in their process by the Coopérative de développement régional Outaouais-Laurentides⁴² and/or the MRC des Collines de l’Outaouais - Développement économique et social⁴³ and/or the Community Housing Transformation Center⁴⁴ and/or the Chambre Wakefield-La Pêche Chamber⁴⁵.

An example of collective entrepreneurship that aligns with these guidelines as well as the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goal 2: *Zero Hunger*⁴⁶ is the creation of a “food hub”⁴⁷ neighbourhood” that supports a community unified around food. Following in the footsteps of the urban agriculture movement, [Cohabitat Wakefield](#) envisions with its partners and network of collaborators to:

- develop the potential of its ecosystems (field, woodland, stream) in order to meet a growing need for food security and for easy access to fresh local produce
- set up gardening containers wherever possible (e.g., balconies, walkways, roofs, courtyards)
- erect, on one of the interior walls of the Pavilion⁴⁸, a “living wall” of micro-greens, edible flowers, vegetables and plants to purify the air
- implement innovative greenhouse technologies⁴⁹ to benefit from year-round food production
- build a multi-level agricultural tower⁵⁰ to circumvent outdoor gardening drawbacks (e.g., terrain/soil characteristics, need to water and weed, uncomfortable working position, attacks from wildlife)
- be equipped with a community kitchen and a walk-in cooler for residents and for producers wishing to do food processing
- reduce waste and add value to surplus food by:
 - maintaining a “freedge”⁵¹
 - hosting a collective kitchen open to all
 - transforming unsold produce into food products and community meals
 - supplying food security organisations

- establish a work and learning platform for apprentice horticulturalists
- support existing local distribution channels (Marché Wakefield Market⁵², Marché de l’Outaouais Market⁵³, Aliments Farmhouse Food⁵⁴, TAACoMOBILE⁵⁵, etc) by providing storage space and a drop-off point, as well as by creating direct distribution and supply channels
- develop markets for the yields, by-products and waste of a polyculture⁵⁶ that could include the breeding of mealworms, hens and bees to support the production of herbs, fruits and vegetables

This proposal will be part of a consultation and partnering process⁵⁷ with stakeholders in the agri-food sector, community organisations and the Municipality of La Pêche for the purpose of defining priorities and ensuring convergent, coherent and co-beneficial actions that will increase, in quantity and diversity, the year-round supply of local food. Ultimately, the goal will not only be to make the food system more sustainable in terms of its environmental impact, but also to make it a vehicle for social justice and equity⁵⁸.

3. CONCLUSION: “FOR A SUSTAINABLE WAY OF LIFE”

Our project conception reflects a paradigm shift with respect to community housing, namely that the current trend of collective property⁵⁹ housing projects is to subscribe to the sustainable development approach. The approaches, strategies, technologies and best practices introduced in Section 2 encompass the various conditions “for a sustainable way of life” favourable to everyone’s well-being within a prosperous, ecological and good quality living environment. The **Cohabitat Wakefield** project offers a concrete opportunity to develop solutions that consolidate the three pillars of sustainable development at the scale of a neighbourhood.

Our next step is to garner the political will for the project through a concertation⁶⁰ process with elected officials and players from the private, public and community sectors. By inviting dialogue on the issues and opportunities related to the diverse components of this leading-edge project, we anticipate that the courses of action emerging from these open discussions will meet the needs and aspirations of the potential partners of **Cohabitat Wakefield**.

4. REFERENCES

¹ Social cohesion is the ongoing process of developing well-being, sense of belonging, and voluntary social participation of the members of society, while developing communities that tolerate and promote a multiplicity of values and cultures. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13511610.2018.1497480>

² Special Planning Program, Sector of Wakefield, p.34 <http://www.villelapeche.qc.ca/downloads/2016-11-ppu-secteur-wakefield-rapport-final-en.pdf>

“Nestled between the Gatineau Valley hills and the Gatineau River, the Wakefield sector is a valuable component of the Municipality of La Pêche as a broad-spectrum development pole and a recreation and tourism growth centre, both locally and regionally. The residents’ shared values are based on community involvement, preserving a quality of life and sustainable development. Diversified and balanced growth is favoured in all aspects of activity, public and community, cultural, residential, commercial and service as well as in job-creating enterprises. The community also aims to preserve its identity as a rural shoreline village, thus giving great importance to the protection of its natural, historical, cultural and architectural heritage.”

³ Sustainable development is defined as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. “The key principle of sustainable development is the integration of environmental, social, and economic concerns into all aspects of decision making. <https://youmatter.world/en/definition/definitions-sustainable-development-sustainability/>

⁴ Sustainable Communities And Sustainable Development: A Review of the Sustainable Communities Plan <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/95987.pdf>
Local Governments, Social Equity, and Sustainable Communities https://icma.org/sites/default/files/306328_FINAL%20REPORT%20Advancing%20Social%20Equity.pdf
How Affordable Housing Design Strengthens Social Resilience <https://nextcity.org/features/view/how-affordable-housing-design-strengthens-social-resilience>

⁵ A housing co-op is a group of people who are both tenants of their housing and collectively owners of the co-op’s real estate. Its self-management by member-tenants distinguishes the cooperative from other types of housing and brings a number of benefits, including:

- affordable quality housing
- long-term security of tenure
- the care of one’s living space
- the opportunity to participate in the management of the co-op
- the opportunity to acquire new knowledge and skills
- the opportunity to engage in one’s community

⁶ Cohabitat Wakefield is the first housing co-op in the MRC des Collines-de-l’Outaouais.

⁷ Because rents are set solely on the basis of operating costs, repairs and reserves, a co-op can offer housing that is more affordable than a comparable private sector rental. That said, affordability is based on the affordability criteria of the municipality where the project is located. Failing such municipal criteria, the provincial criteria may be used. Where no affordability criteria exist, CHMC determines affordability for rental housing projects based on the Median Market Rent (MMR). The rent must be below the MMR for new construction, based on CMHC MAC data for the area in question. ; *Defining the Affordability of Housing in Canada* <https://assets.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/sf/project/cmhc/pubsandreports/research-insights/2019/research-insight-defining-affordability-housing-canada-69468-en.pdf>

⁸ In accordance with the reasons and values underlying the *Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms*, including “full and equal recognition and exercise of his human rights and freedoms, without distinction, exclusion or preference...” <http://legisquebec.gouv.qc.ca/en/showdoc/cs/c-12>

⁹ Cohabitat Wakefield Charter https://cohabitat-wakefield.ca/pdf/charte_Cohabitat_Wakefield.pdf

¹⁰ Short term rentals <http://www.villelapeche.qc.ca/en/municipal-life/projects/short-term-rentals/>

¹¹ Info La Pêche, March 2019, Municipal Column, *Affordable housing: Cohabitat Wakefield*, p. 4 http://www.villelapeche.qc.ca/downloads/Info%20La%20Peche/info-la-peche-mars-2019_en.pdf

¹² Éco-quartier <https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%89coquartier> Sustainable Communities and Neighbourhoods: Theory, Policy and Practice ; <https://infed.org/mobi/sustainable-communities-and-neighbourhoods-theory-policy-and-practice/>

- ¹³ What Is Diversity And How I Define It In The Social Context <https://embracingdiversity.us/what-is-diversity-define-social-diversity/>
- ¹⁴ Functional Diversity at Heart of Real Estate Projects <https://www.geoconsulting.be/en/functional-diversity-at-the-heart-of-real-estate-projects/>
- ¹⁵ Écoquartier <http://collectivitesviables.org/articles/ecoquartiers.aspx>
- ¹⁶ The land corresponds to Site 7 designated on page 30 of the report: *Special Planning Program – Sector of Wakefield* as a low and medium density residential use. This site corresponds to the Parc de la Vallée, adjacent to 140 Chemin de la Vallée de Wakefield <https://goo.gl/maps/GHUnSDARD8u>
- ¹⁷ The basic architectural concept will revolve around the parameters of zoning “Rb -601” (medium density residential) which limits building height to 2 storeys with a semi-basement.
- ¹⁸ Regenerative Architecture Principles: A Departure From Modern Sustainable Design <https://hmcarchitects.com/news/regenerative-architecture-principles-a-departure-from-modern-sustainable-design-2019-04-12/>
- ¹⁹ The Living Building Challenge is the world’s most rigorous proven performance standard for buildings. This certification program defines livings buildings as:
- regenerative buildings that connect occupants to light, air, food, nature, and community
 - self-sufficient and remain within the resource limits of their site
 - creating a positive impact on the human and natural systems that interact with them
- <https://living-future.org/lbc/>
- ²⁰ Living, Regenerative, and Adaptive Buildings <https://www.wbdg.org/resources/living-regenerative-and-adaptive-buildings>
- ²¹ Chapter: 10 Healthy Housing <https://www.nap.edu/read/18996/chapter/15>
- ²² Universal design is the design of buildings, products or environments to make them accessible to all people, regardless of age, disability or other factors https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal_design
- ²³ Universal Design for New Housing Units <https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/developing-and-renovating/accessible-adaptable-housing/universal-design-in-new-housing>
- ²⁴ Guide d'aide à la conception et à la création d'un Habitat Ami Des Aînés <https://www.qualidom.be/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/hada-version-PDF15.07.2016.pdf>
- ²⁵ A dual aspect unit is one with openable windows on two or more walls, allowing for views in more than just one direction. Note that this configuration does not allow for access via a central corridor.
- ²⁶ The porch also acts as a buffer between public and private space.
- ²⁷ Upcycling is the process of transforming by-products, waste materials, or unwanted products into new materials or products perceived to be of greater quality <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Upcycling>
- ²⁸ Novoclimat Small Multiple-Unit Buildings <https://transitionenergetique.gouv.qc.ca/en/residential/programs/novoclimat/novoclimat-small-multiple-unit-buildings>
- ²⁹ Solar Air Heating Systems http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/engineer/facts/sol_air.htm
- ³⁰ The National Housing Strategy’s priority areas for action <https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/nhs/guidepage-strategy/priority-areas-for-action>
- ³¹ The National Housing Strategy identifies the following as vulnerable Canadians who have difficulty finding and affording housing that meets their needs:

- women and children fleeing domestic violence
- seniors
- young adults
- indigenous peoples
- people with disabilities
- people dealing with mental health and addiction issues
- veterans
- LGBTQ2+
- racialized groups
- recent immigrants, especially refugees
- people experiencing homelessness

³² Grounds of discrimination: definitions and scope of protection <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/iii-principles-and-concepts/3-grounds-discrimination-definitions-and-scope-protection> women and children fleeing domestic violence, seniors, young adults, indigenous peoples, people with disabilities, people dealing with mental health and addiction issues, veterans, LGBTQ2+, racialized groups, recent immigrants, especially refugees, people experiencing homelessness

³³ Cultural mosaic https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural_mosaic

³⁴ In from the Margins, Part II: Reducing Barriers to Social Inclusion and Social Cohesion <https://sencanada.ca/content/sen/Committee/411/soci/rep/rep26jun13-e.pdf>

³⁵ Nonviolent Communication and Conflict Resolution <https://www.nonviolentcommunication.com/learn-nonviolent-communication/nvc-conflict-resolution/>

³⁶ That said, the smooth functioning of the housing co-op solicits the commitment and participation of all its residents, within their skills and abilities.

³⁷ The Municipality has updated its development vision in its *2019-2023 Strategic Plan – Municipality of La Pêche*:
“La Pêche is a highly desirable community recognized among municipalities with fewer than 10,000 inhabitants as a model of land use, vitality, and sustainable development.”

³⁸ Guidance Notes to the Co-operative Principles <https://www.ica.coop/sites/default/files/publication-files/ica-guidance-notes-en-310629900.pdf>

³⁹ Advocated by the sociocratic mode of governance, decisions of policies and strategies are taken by consent in order to strengthen the equivalence between the members and to favour the emergence of “collective intelligence”. There is consent when a proposal no longer encounters any significant and reasonable objection in the group concerned. https://www.sociocracyforall.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Consent-process_ELC-1.pdf

⁴⁰ Evaluation criteria of a functional mix proposal include:

- its financial viability
- the eco-responsibility of its operations
- its demand on common resources and infrastructure
- its addition to common resources and infrastructure
- the impact of the exercise of its activities on the peaceful enjoyment of the premises
- its contribution to the needs of members and those of local populations
- its harmonization with the functions already established

⁴¹ What is co-production? <https://www.thinklocalactpersonal.org.uk/co-production-in-commissioning-tool/co-production/In-more-detail/what-is-co-production/>; Co-production in social care: What it is and how to do it ; <https://www.scie.org.uk/publications/guides/guide51/what-is-coproduction/>

⁴² CDROL pursues a regional development mission by supporting the social economy. <https://cdrol.coop/>

⁴³ The mission of the department of economic and social development of the MRC des Collines-de-l’Outaouais is to contribute to economic development and local development by taking care to stimulate, promote and support private entrepreneurship, social economy entrepreneurship and collective entrepreneurship in a sustainable manner throughout its territory. <https://www.facebook.com/mrccollines/>

⁴⁴ The Community Housing Transformation Centre works with housing organizations across Canada to drive transformation, sustainability and growth in community housing <https://centre.support/>

⁴⁵ Why join the Chamber <https://cwlpc.ca/why-join/>

⁴⁶ The United Nations has defined 17 sustainable development goals, the second of which reads as follows: “End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture.” <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/hunger/>

⁴⁷ Local Food Systems <https://community-wealth.org/strategies/panel/urban-ag/index.html>

⁴⁸ Cohabitat Wakefield’s common, multifunctional building

⁴⁹ For example, *Growcer* offers container farming systems which combine hydroponic technology with precision climate controls <https://www.thegrowcer.ca/>

⁵⁰ Agricultural towers for multi-level cultivation <https://www.courtirey.com/pdf/LaChaluneENVOIPDFAnglais.pdf>

⁵¹ A freedge is a sharing mechanism to reduce food waste and give “together” a boost to people suffering from food insecurity. The “community fridge” is supplied with food donations from the public, restaurateurs and grocery stores. <https://freedge.org/>

⁵² Le Marché Wakefield Market welcomes local producers to sell their food or crafts <http://www.marchewakefieldmarket.ca/>

⁵³ Le *Marché de l’Outaouais Market* is a non-profit solidarity co-op that creating a direct link between producers and consumers <https://marcheoutaouais.com/index.php?lang=EN>

⁵⁴ The *Aliments Farmhouse Food* is a cooperative of small farms in the Ottawa-Gatineau region that offers bi-weekly harvest boxes delivered to your door <https://www.alimentsfarmhousefood.com/>

⁵⁵ *TAACoMOBILE* is a mobile refrigerated unit that supplies the elderly population and their families with fresh fruits and vegetables from local farmers in their living environment. <https://www.tabledesainesdescollines.org/taacomobile>

⁵⁶ Polyculture <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polyculture>

⁵⁷ 10 Steps for Successful Partnering <https://buscouncil.ca/busgurus/media/pdf/Successful-Partnering-en.pdf>

⁵⁸ Serving Social Justice: The Role of the Commons in Sustainable Food Systems <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.1013.9699&rep=rep1&type=pdf>

⁵⁹ Community housing in Quebec corresponds to housing owned by housing cooperatives and rental housing not-for-profit organisations (NPOs). Collective property: The residents are both tenants of the dwellings and collectively owners of the real estate.

⁶⁰ A form of dialogue and co-decision, implying the mutual exchange of information, open discussion and knowledge sharing <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/concertation>