

Harbourside Cohousing membership growing fast



By Sooke News Mirror

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Sooke resident Noelle Wass was intrigued when she read a newspaper article about the Harbourside senior cohousing project happening in her own hometown, but her husband Dal Little was skeptical.

Little is a guy who likes being in charge, who does things on his own, and who admits he thought the whole idea sounded "kind of flaky." However, his wife convinced him to attend an information meeting to learn more about the project.

"Boy am I ever glad I did," Little, a former fish camp owner and special needs teacher, says now. When he heard more about the concept, he said to himself, "This is it. This is where we're going."

Little and Wass immediately felt "comfortable with the people" involved, and were impressed by the site (right on the waterfront on Horne Road). Little, 60, and Wass, 47, both work for the Sooke school district, and currently live in a roomy house with their two teenaged sons. Yet, this project "fit a whole bunch of things we'd been thinking about," Little says.

Cohousing projects are regular strata developments where the residents choose to live in smaller, environmentally friendly private homes and agree to look out for each other, like an old fashioned neighbourhood, while sharing certain amenities.

The final design for the Sooke cohousing project has not yet been decided, so Little and Wass are also part of the development process, since they are now official members of Harbourside. They are working with other members, a cohousing consultant, and an architect to develop the definitive design for the site and for the energy efficient homes that will be built there. Little likes the idea of being part of the Harbourside community of neighbours, and, as a lifelong fisherman, likes having the wharf there too.

Ellen Candlish, 59, of Colwood, was also "absolutely not sure" when her husband Robert Wells, 63, showed her a recent article on cohousing, a concept they had both heard about years ago from a German friend.

But when they attended an info meeting in February, Candlish says, "We walked in the door, and saw the people and felt the amazing energy in the room" and were sold. The waterfront location didn't hurt either. They also realized how important

community is to them, along with pursuing an active and healthy lifestyle. Candlish is a runner and recently completed her first triathlon.

She is also a fulltime foster parent whose current foster children will soon be grown and gone. Candlish and Wells have an adult daughter with physical challenges, so they needed to find a future home where all three of them could live easily, i.e. a home with wheelchair accessibility and where they could install their own lift system. Harbourside offers that possibility, since the units will all be designed for people to easily "age in place."

Membership in Harbourside Cohousing is growing fast as area residents learn more about it, but there are still spaces available. Margaret Critchlow, one of the founding members of the project, says Harbourside is attracting active young seniors to Sooke's downtown core, which is "an energizing thing for Sooke" as these adventurous seniors will give both the local economy and local volunteerism a boost.

The Harbourside development project is currently in the process of applying for rezoning in Sooke. A neighbourhood public information meeting to discuss the rezoning is scheduled for 7 p.m. on June 13.

Additionally, an information meeting for all interested in joining Harbourside, or in learning more about it, will be held June 16 at 7:15 p.m. Both meetings will take place on site at 6669 Horne Road, Sooke.

For further information go to www.harbourside.ca, or email seniorcohousing@gmail.com or call 250-642-2996

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