

Submission to City of Richmond Planning Committee

March 22, 2022

My name is Deirdre Whalen and I have lived in Richmond since 1975. I've seen a lot of changes in the city I love since then, especially in the development of high-cost condo housing.

I would like to speak today on items 3, 4, and 5 as I see them as connected. I commend the excellent work of City staff on these reports. The Child Care strategy and the Seniors strategy both lay a framework for the future.

However, they both depend on the provision of rental housing, because seniors and families are two prominent groups that are part of the well-reported 20% of Richmond residents experiencing poverty. These are a large proportion of Richmondites who rent.

The City's Housing Needs report 2021 states that 94% of housing builds in the last 30 years have been condos and houses. Only 4% have been rentals.¹

This outcome is exemplified in the City's Affordable Housing strategy, which is developer driven and depends on developers providing low-end market rental (LEMR) housing units.²

Item #3 is a good report and it is in line with the Affordable Housing strategy. It seeks approval for a housing agreement where the developer promises 13 LEMR units and 121 condos. In other words, only 10% of this new build is slated for rental, and market rental at that.

The City should not be depending only on private interests to provide housing our community so sorely needs. This community should be welcoming seniors, families, newcomers, single parents, people with disabilities, and low wage workers to come, stay and live here.

For any city to remain a vibrant and thriving community, it needs a variety of incomes, not just people who can afford \$mill condos. Service workers cannot afford to live here. Young professionals who grew up here can't afford to stay. Even first responders are finding it difficult to find housing they can afford.

Richmond deserves better. There have been no non-market rentals built for at least five years. With a burgeoning seniors' population and with more newcomer families moving here, non-market housing is the only thing that make sense. Federal and provincial funding is available. Why is City Council not prioritizing the construction of non-market housing?

Seniors and families needing childcare, especially need housing they can afford. These vulnerable groups are more likely to visit the food bank and to seek out free community meals than other residents. The Food Bank reports that they receive over 2,000 clients a week.³ Hajira Hussain, Executive Director also reports at least 1/3 of their clients are children and about 52% of their households are living in market rentals.

Housing, Seniors, and Childcare are closely connected. Richmond City Council ignores this at their peril. Strategies are just reports sitting on a shelf if there is nowhere for ordinary people to live.

Thank you

Deirdre Whalen
13631 Blundell Road
Richmond, BC V6W 1B6

¹ City of Richmond Housing Needs Report 2021
https://www.richmond.ca/_shared/assets/housingneeds59652.pdf

² City of Richmond Affordable Housing strategy 2017-2027
https://www.richmond.ca/_shared/assets/City_of_Richmond_Affordable_Housing_Strategy54955.pdf

³ Richmond Food Bank Society <https://richmondfoodbank.org/about-us/>