

ARGUMENT BRIEF

Presented in defense of the Aboriginal Land Trust affordable housing project proposed for 823-841 Sixth Street

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March 9th, 2021

(Revised and updated May 24th, 2021)

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A: Preamble

The purpose of this argument brief is to defend the development of the affordable housing project proposed by the Aboriginal Land Trust Society for 823-841 Sixth Street. This brief lays out arguments in favour of rezoning the proposed site and amending the Land Use Designation Map in the Official Community Plan to accommodate this development. This brief further considers a set of potential objections and offers replies to each objection.

B: Main Conclusion

A rezoning and amendment to the Official Community Plan (hereafter, "OCP") should be made to permit the development of the Aboriginal Land Trust Society's six-storey affordable housing apartment building at the site of 823-841 Sixth Street (hereafter, "ALT project").

C: Supporting Arguments

C1: Consistency with OCP Policy Goals

The development of the ALT project is deeply consonant with a preponderance of the policy goals in the OCP. This project directly helps to realize the following policy goals within the OCP: Community and Well-Being (1.1, 1.2, 1.4, 1.5, 1.7, and 1.8); Culture (2.1 and 2.2); Housing (8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.4, 8.5, and 8.6); Public Realm and Urban Design (10.1 and 10.2); and Transportation and Accessibility (11.3 and 11.4). The project does not conflict with any of the policy goals within the OCP. A commitment to the OCP entails a commitment to approve the development of this project through a rezoning of the proposed location and amendment of the Land Use Designation Map in the OCP.

As further illustration, a selection of representative quotes from the OCP demonstrates the deep alignment between the ALT project and the values and policy goals of the OCP:

- "New Westminster citizens, community groups, and the City are socially minded. We support our neighbours and work together to create a caring and inclusive community. As a socially minded community, we recognize the importance of a healthy and comfortable home. We work across sectors and professions to increase housing choices in our community. We strive to ensure there is housing available along the entire continuum, from emergency and transition housing to affordable and market rental. More choices allow families to meet their changing needs, enable empty nesters and seniors to downsize and stay in their neighbourhood, provide accessible and integrated homes for new immigrants and refugees, and retain and attract youth and young professionals that are just entering the housing market." (OCP, p.29, Community Vision)
- "Poverty and food insecurity are linked to many different negative socio-economic outcomes from poor health to unemployment. Poverty impacts not only those directly

affected but also the whole of society through increased demands on emergency housing and medical services. The City is working to create a more caring and compassionate community in which the basic needs of residents are met, including the need for food, health and shelter.” (OCP, p.37, Policy 1.1)

- “Policy 1.2: Create a community that is welcoming, inclusive and accepting of people with different backgrounds, cultures and lifestyles.” (OCP, p.39)
- “To meet housing needs, the city must be able to offer housing options that are diverse in terms of cost, location, number of bedrooms, tenure and type in each neighbourhood.” (OCP, p.95, 8.0 Housing)
- “Policy 8.1: Facilitate the creation and maintenance of housing that offers options for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.” (OCP, p.97)
- “Policy 8.2: Facilitate access to affordable and non-market housing for low- to moderate-income households.” (OCP, p.98)
- “Target Groups for Affordable Housing - While housing affordability is important for all New Westminster residents, six population groups have been identified as priority groups who are particularly affected by housing issues in the city: hidden homeless (people staying with family or friends); lower-income renters; seniors and persons with disabilities; aboriginal households; immigrants and refugees; and moderate-income households.” (OCP, p.98, Policy 8.2)
- “Policy 8.3: Foster a rental housing stock in which tenants have adequate opportunities to live in healthy, safe and secure housing.” (OCP, p.99)
- “Policy 8.4: Create neighbourhoods with housing options for people of all ages, abilities and household types to meet their changing needs.” (OCP, p.101)
- “Three-bedroom units are attractive to families with children but multiple unit housing with three or more bedrooms is in short supply.” (OCP, p.102, Policy 8.4)
- “Policy 8.5: Design housing to be livable and to foster social cohesion and connectivity.” (OCP, p.103)
- “Policy 8.6: Provide housing to meet the needs of the projected population in ways that ensure growth contributes positively to the neighbourhood context.” (OCP, p.104)
- “The City should continue to...[e]xplore opportunities through development projects along designated Great Streets to implement walking, cycling, transit and place-making

elements in accordance with the Great Street policies contained in the Master Transportation Plan.” (OCP, p.125, Policy 11.2)

C2: Interpretation of the OCP Land Use Designation Map:

The OCP is an aspirational document that provides a framework for managing future growth and change in New Westminster (OCP, p.6). The twelve sections of policy goals that form the bulk of the OCP are the primary elements of that framework. The Land Use Designation Map on p.160 of the OCP should be understood as derivative of the policy goals of the OCP rather than as a standalone map separate from those goals (OCP, p.20). The following quote further illustrates this point:

“The land use concept communicates future land uses which the City may encourage over time. The map and designations are intended to reflect the goals and policies of the Official Community Plan and should be read together. Combining the information in this section with the policies throughout the Plan provides a balanced reflection of where, when and how development should proceed throughout the city.” (OCP, p.145)

In other words, it is the policy goals of the OCP that shape the aspirational land use designations within the OCP. Accordingly, the Land Use Designation Map should not be interpreted in such a way that would conflict with the policy goals of the OCP. Thus, the proposed location of the ALT project should be rezoned and the map amended to accommodate it, as this will best realize the policy goals of the OCP.

The proposed location of the ALT project is currently zoned for RS-2 (Single Detached Residential Districts) with a zoning of RT (Residential – Infill Townhouse) identified on the current Land Use Designation Map in the OCP. Given the consistency of the ALT project with the OCP policy goals, the proposed site should be rezoned to RM (Residential – Multiple Unit Buildings) to accommodate this project (including the assignment of this site as a Comprehensive Development District specifying it as residential rental tenure), and the Land Use Designation Map should be amended accordingly. The rezoning and amendment are justified as the Land Use Designation Map should be properly understood as derivative of the OCP policy goals: revising the map to accommodate the ALT project is to act in accord with OCP policy goals; by contrast, insisting on a rigid adherence to what is an aspirational and amendable map in order to prohibit the development of the ALT project would be to act in conflict with the preponderance of the policy goals of the OCP.

C3: Consistency with the 2019-2022 Strategic Plan

The development of the ALT project (and the rezoning and OCP amendment permitting this project) is deeply consonant with the goals of the City of New Westminster 2019-2022 Strategic Plan, especially related to affordable housing and reconciliation in providing affordable rental units for Indigenous and Swahili peoples in New Westminster, but also the promotion of culture

in the project's focus on making space for traditional knowledge, art, and community and sustainable transportation infrastructure in constructing a new multi-use pathway facilitating pedestrian and cyclist traffic between Fifth and Sixth Street. A commitment to the city's strategic plan entails a commitment to supporting the development of the ALT project.

As further illustration, a selection of representative quotes from the strategic plan demonstrates the deep alignment between the ALT project and the directions laid out in the strategic plan:

- “Priority Area: Affordable Housing - Affordable housing is critical for health, security and overall well-being and encompasses choice, supply, security, affordability and suitability. As a City, we strive to do our part to meet the housing needs of our diverse community, including protecting rental housing stock and tenants’ rights, addressing homelessness, and locating housing close to employment, childcare and services.” (Strategic Plan, p.8)
- “Key directions: Protect and enhance rental housing, including below and non-market units; Aggressively pursue creative approaches to housing policy and on-the-ground projects to transform the way housing is provided in New Westminster; Facilitate development of a range of ground-oriented infill housing and provision of other choices in housing, under a range of tenures and ownership models; Explore strategies to reduce homelessness, including developing opportunities for supportive housing; and Use partnerships, negotiations with developers, and leveraging of City resources to secure development of below and non-market housing, and affordable child care.” (Strategic Plan, p.8)
- “Priority Area: Reconciliation, Inclusion and Engagement - Our community is equitable, inclusive and welcoming, and we recognize cultural diversity as a source of enrichment and strength. We value, foster and maintain strong relations with our Indigenous members, and embrace Reconciliation as a path forward. We also seek to ensure ours is a socially-connected and engaged community, where all residents have opportunities to be involved.” (Strategic Plan, p.12)

C4: Importance of Affordable and Inclusive Housing

One of the central challenges faced by New Westminster is how to manage population growth forecasted in demographic projections in a balanced, sustainable, and equitable manner. To ensure that growth is equitable and just, densification must not lead to the displacement or exclusion of any segment of the population, especially marginalized groups disproportionately affected by housing insecurity. Accordingly, the city must ensure that the stock of affordable housing accessible to these groups steadily increases over time, ideally at a faster pace than overall development in order to redress current inequities in New Westminster's housing supply. The conversation that we should really be having as a community is not wrestling with this one project but rather envisioning how these types of affordable and inclusive housing projects can be developed and implemented across the city on a regular basis. The goals of the

both the OCP and the strategic plan support the development of affordable and inclusive housing as a key aspect of equitable growth in New Westminster. The approval of the ALT project aligns with these goals.

On a broader level, the ALT project helps to advance [the human right to housing](#) in our community. The right to housing means that it befits the dignity of every human being to have access to secure, stable, accessible, and affordable housing. In thinking about how the violation of this right deeply affects many individuals and families in our region, it is important to recognize that human beings are fundamentally interdependent with shared vulnerabilities and a responsibility to respect one another's rights and to care for one another. Accordingly, this implies that communities have a responsibility to ensure the provision and development of affordable housing, with a special focus on those whose right to housing is most threatened. The reality is that we need to expand the supply of affordable housing across New Westminster and the broader region to secure the right to housing for all in our communities; the ALT project cannot solve this broader problem on its own, but it is a step in the right direction and should be approved.

C5: Importance of Reconciliation

The development of the ALT project is strongly supported by the city's stated commitment to reconciliation with Indigenous peoples in its strategic plan. The development of this project is also consistent with aspects of reconciliation obliquely referenced in the OCP. (Given the important value of reconciliation, it is worth emphasizing that the OCP should eventually be amended to include a full section on reconciliation with Indigenous peoples as part of its policy goals framework.) As the City of New Westminster develops a land acknowledgment with regard to Indigenous territorial claims, it is worth recognizing that projects with substantial benefits to Indigenous peoples, such as the ALT project, should move ahead for such an acknowledgement to be substantive. A narrow reading of a planning document used to exclude Indigenous peoples from unceded land would be to perpetuate the injustice of colonial exploitation. There is a great need for housing for Indigenous communities and facilitating the development of spaces such as the ALT project is one small way to redress some of this past injustice and advance the goals of reconciliation. From a wider perspective, the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action* specifically calls on municipal governments "to fully adopt and implement the *United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* as the framework for reconciliation" (Call to Action 43). Among the rights laid out in the *United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* are those pertaining to housing and economic security for Indigenous peoples:

"1. Indigenous peoples have the right, without discrimination, to the improvement of their economic and social conditions, including, inter alia, in the areas of education, employment, vocational training and retraining, housing, sanitation, health and social security.

2. States shall take effective measures and, where appropriate, special measures to ensure continuing improvement of their economic and social conditions. Particular attention shall be paid to the rights and special needs of indigenous elders, women, youth, children and persons with disabilities.” (Article 21)

Housing is an important right and should be understood as fundamental here; indeed, secure housing is a necessary precondition for successful outcomes in the areas of education, employment, and health. Given the importance of this right, states – including municipal governments – should take effective and even special measures to ensure the right to housing for Indigenous peoples. The rezoning and amendment of the OCP necessary to approve the development of the ALT project is clearly an action recommended by these principles and the broader spirit of these documents, which call on governments, including municipal governments, to adopt a framework of reconciliation in their interaction with Indigenous peoples.

C6: Principled not Arbitrary Nature of Rezoning and OCP Amendment

For the city to have clarity in its longer-term planning and infrastructure investments, amendments to documents such as the OCP must be principled and not arbitrary. The rezoning and amendment to the Land Use Designation Map in the OCP that would be necessary to approve the development of the ALT project is a principled and not an arbitrary change. First, the amendment is deeply consonant with the policy goals of both the OCP and the strategic plan around housing affordability and reconciliation. Second, the designation of RM (Residential – Multiple Unit Buildings) for the proposed site is consistent with the general increase in density along pedestrian-oriented transit corridors such as Sixth Street, which is advocated for explicitly in the overview of policy goals related to housing on p.96 of the OCP. Third, the ALT project is consistent with the “Great Street” development of Sixth Street described in both section 10.2 of the OCP and section 4.4 of the Master Transportation Plan. Fourth, Sixth Street from Edmonds Street to the north and Front Street to the south is predominantly commercial and higher-density residential – it would be consistent with the rest of Sixth Street for the stretch of Sixth Street between Tenth Avenue and Eighth Avenue to be rezoned to accommodate RM-style buildings, especially when these building projects are deeply consonant with the values and principles in the city’s planning philosophy. The amendment to the OCP Land Use Designation Map is a principled change consistent with the longer-term planning priorities outlined in many of the relevant planning documents such as the OCP itself, the Master Transportation Plan, and the City of New Westminster 2019-2022 Strategic Plan.

D: Objections and Replies

Objection 1:

The OCP is a contract between the municipal government and its citizens and should not be revised.

Reply to Objection 1:

The OCP is not a contractual document between the municipal government and city residents; rather, it is an aspirational planning document regulated within sections 471-478 of the Local Government Act. This act permits the amendment (or even repeal) of an OCP by a municipal government. While section 475.1 of the act specifies that relevant stakeholders within a community should be consulted with regard to proposed amendments, the OCP should clearly *not* be interpreted as a bilateral contract where a majority of residents in a city would need to approve an amendment to the OCP for it to be legitimate. Amendments to the OCP fall within the legitimate purview of the municipal government and they can and should be made when necessary.

Furthermore, the OCP has been amended ten times since its adoption in 2017, including changes related to the expansion of heritage preservation, the provision of childcare spaces, and the development of temporary modular housing (source: [https://www.newwestcity.ca/database/files/library/Official_Communitiy_Plan_Adoption_Bylaw_7925_2017_\(consolidated_June_2020\).pdf](https://www.newwestcity.ca/database/files/library/Official_Communitiy_Plan_Adoption_Bylaw_7925_2017_(consolidated_June_2020).pdf)). Amendments to the OCP should not only be permitted but encouraged where amendments represent principled changes that benefit the community. The amendment of the Land Use Designation Map in the OCP to accommodate the development of the ALT project would best realize the OCP policy goals around housing and would bring the map and policy goals into a closer alignment in a way that would serve the good of the community.

Objection 2:

The development of the ALT project in its proposed location on Sixth Street conflicts with the OCP and should be prohibited based on the Land Use Designation Map in the OCP.

Reply to Objection 2:

As argued above, the ALT project is deeply consonant with the values and policy goals of the OCP. Insisting on a rigid adherence to the Land Use Designation Map - where the map is interpreted as independent of the policy goals of the OCP and used to reject a project consonant with those goals - is ultimately to reject the core of the OCP. Fidelity to the OCP is best realized by approving the ALT project. See the argument in C2 above for further analysis.

Objection 3:

Approving the ALT project at this site would set a precedent allowing haphazard development in any area of the city based on subjective personal and political priorities, which would be contrary to the principled approach to development envisioned within the OCP.

Reply to Objection 3:

This objection holds that the approval of the ALT project would essentially be arbitrary from a planning perspective. There are two senses of “arbitrary” being employed in this objection. In the first sense, there is a purported arbitrariness of process, where it is alleged that the approval process is being usurped by the subjective political agenda of specific members of the community rather than being guided by more objective “best practices” of urban planning and a respect for the collective production of the OCP. In the second sense, this purported arbitrariness of process would lead to an arbitrariness of placement, where any building of whatever density could be placed in any area of the city no matter how it affected the surrounding neighbourhood. The approval of the ALT project, however, would not be arbitrary in either sense.

In terms of process, the approval of the ALT project would not be arbitrary for several reasons. First, the promotion of affordable housing, the advancement of reconciliation, and the prioritization of equity and inclusion in development should not be seen as mere elements of a subjective political agenda. They are, rather, basic principles of distributive and social justice within a well-functioning democracy, which seeks to ensure the wellbeing of every member of society. These principles should guide the functioning of a whole range of democratic structures in our society, including municipal development approval processes. Second, these principles are deeply embedded within the core policy goals of key planning documents in the City of New Westminster, as has been demonstrated in previous sections. Thus, a respect for the collective production of the OCP is ultimately a respect for these principles. Third, if a set of practices of urban planning resistant to densification were to have the effect of disregarding or undermining these principles (even if not intended), they should not be designated as “best practices” – things like massing, transition, and setback are important to consider, but they should not be treated as fundamental in such a way that would abrogate these core principles; rather, best practices of urban planning both recognize the value of densification, especially where it helps to realize these principles, and seek to accommodate that densification in ways that make a meaningful difference to the challenge of housing insecurity in our region while responding to the concerns of local residents about potential impacts where possible. In all of these ways, the process for the ALT project up to the present has been principled rather than arbitrary and it would be principled for council to approve this project.

In terms of placement, one possible formulation of this objection is a kind of slippery slope argument that should be rejected. It does not logically follow that the approval of

the ALT project in its proposed location would necessarily lead to the approval of any building in any area of the city. But the objector may respond that, while the approval of the ALT project may not necessarily lead to random buildings being put in random places in practice, it would set a precedent of making every area of the city at risk of random development that could harm neighbourhoods or the city as a whole from a planning perspective. For the reasons given in section C6 above, however, the approval of the ALT project at its proposed location would not be an example of random development but rather of principled densification. Accordingly, it should not be seen as arbitrary in terms of placement and thus not as encouraging any kind of random approach to development.

Approving the ALT project should not be seen as arbitrary in any sense – it would be a principled decision both in terms of process and in terms of placement. By contrast, failing to approve the ALT project by insisting upon a narrow interpretation of the aspirational Land Use Designation Map in the OCP would be arbitrary given that this map should be interpreted as derivative of the OCP policy goals (as outlined in section C2 above); failing to approve the ALT project would be arbitrary because it would set the precedent of allowing the complaints of a subset of the community to supersede the realization of important policy goals in the OCP in various instances.

Objection 4:

There is a petition opposed to the development of the ALT project that has garnered over 1300 signatures (as of April 28th, 2021) and it would be anti-democratic for Mayor and Council to ignore this petition and approve the project.

Reply to Objection 4:

The approval of the ALT project is something that should be decided by principle and not by petition. What matters in this decision is the quality of argument and not the quantity of signatures on any one side of the issue. A truly democratic decision by elected officials involves not listening to the loudest voices but rather protecting the welfare of all citizens, especially marginalized groups who disproportionately face challenges in society such as housing insecurity. A genuine democracy should focus on protecting the rights of marginalized groups – for instance, the right to housing in the midst of economic and social conditions that yield housing insecurity – lest society devolve into an anti-democratic majoritarianism where powerful groups create policies that benefit themselves but harm and exclude marginalized groups. Thus, even if the petition against the development of the ALT project were to actually represent the view of a majority of citizens, it should still not be countenanced in considering whether or not to go ahead with this project: what counts here are principles of justice, which are best served by prioritizing the goods of affordable housing and reconciliation.

There are, furthermore, serious reasons to doubt the representative quality of the petition raised against the ALT project in and of itself.

First, the petition is unrepresentative of the wider community. The map of petition signatures skews quite heavily toward single-detached homeowners in New Westminster. The neighbourhood of Glenbrooke North (higher concentration of single-family homeowners) has the highest number of signatures at 443 while the neighbourhood of Moody Park directly adjacent to the development site (lower concentration of single-detached homeowners) has 122 signatures. Consider another contrast: the neighbourhoods of Queens Park and the Brow of the Hill are roughly equidistant from the development site – Queens Park (higher concentration of single-detached homeowners) has 181 signatures while the Brow of the Hill (lower concentration of single-family homeowners, higher proportion of renters, much higher population) has 53 signatures. (Source for survey signatures: <https://ourcity2041.ca/>; Source for demographic information about neighbourhoods: <https://www.newwestcity.ca/statistics#neighbourhood-profiles-2006-census>) The petition primarily tells us that a subset of the population, composed mostly of single-detached homeowners, is upset about the ALT project; but this provides no reliable insight into the views of different demographics within New Westminster such as renters, who make up over 45% of households in the city. While groups of residents have the right to present council with a petition expressing their views, this specific petition should not be understood as reliably representative of the will of the community as a whole since the perspective of single-detached homeowners are overrepresented relative to the general population; the petition should be weighed accordingly as only one piece of feedback within a wider set of perspectives in the community.

Second, the petition is misrepresentative. The primary petition itself says that the ALT project should be rejected because it does not conform to the current zoning of RS-2 (Single Detached Residential) or the proposed zoning of RT (Residential – Infill Townhouse) in the Land Use Designation Map of the OCP. The messaging around the petition (on the opposition's website and the opposition's signs) frames the issue as though commitment to the OCP entails rejecting the development of the ALT project. This framing of the issues, however, is misrepresentative. With respect to the issue of zoning, the issue is not whether the project conforms to the current zoning or proposed zoning in the current Land Use Designation Map in the OCP – it is evident that the ALT project does not conform to the existing zoning, which is the reason why deliberation about this project has taken place at the Advisory Planning Commission, a public hearing before council, and within the wider community; rather, the issue is whether the zoning should be amended from its current status to permit the development of this project given the proposed benefits of the project. While the petition explicitly states opposition to the ALT project, the accompanying language is poorly framed because it does not really get at the issue of whether or not the zoning in the area *should* be changed – for example, whether or not the goals of affordable housing or reconciliation

merit a change in zoning at the proposed location to accommodate the ALT project. Indeed, the words “rezoning”, “amendment”, and “affordable housing” do not appear in the language of the petition; likewise, neither the name of the project nor the aims of the project are mentioned. Accordingly, the petition does not adequately describe the set of core issues under consideration with respect to the ALT project. A better framing of the issue in the petition’s wording would address these issues and give a principled reason for *why* the zoning should *not* be changed (or even simply state that the zoning should not be changed).

In the context around the petition (website, signage, talking points), the primary reason given for objecting to the ALT project is that rezoning the proposed site would be to disregard the OCP. The broad assertion that council ought to uphold or protect the OCP does nothing on its own to decide the issue at hand. The real issue to consider is what a commitment to the OCP entails with regard to the ALT project. For the opposition to make a convincing case here, it is not enough to state simply that the ALT project conflicts with the existing zoning in the OCP’s Land Use Designation Map; rather, the opposition would need to explain why an amendment to the Land Use Designation Map here conflicts with a commitment to the OCP as a whole and why preserving the Land Use Designation Map in its current form best realizes the policy goals in the OCP as it pertains to the proposed site of the ALT project. But by contrast, I would argue that prioritizing a narrow reading of the Land Use Designation Map to restrict the development of the ALT project would demonstrate a lack of fidelity to the OCP, since the policy goals of the OCP clearly recommend the development of affordable housing in the city, especially along major corridors such as Sixth Street. Simply put, a commitment to upholding the OCP entails a commitment to approving this project.

Objection 5:

The Glenbrooke North Residents Association voted in favour of a motion to send a letter to Mayor and Council that declares their opposition to changing the OCP to allow the ALT project.

Reply to Objection 5:

Local resident associations should be encouraged to reflect on issues facing their neighbourhood and to send their feedback to staff and council. While letters from local resident associations should be considered and evaluated by staff and council, they should not be counted as decisive since they represent only the limited perspective of one particular set of stakeholders in the community. The perspectives of demographic groups facing housing insecurity, however, must also be considered and should even be given the most weight in these discussions since these groups are most at risk of having their basic rights (such as the right to housing) curtailed and these groups have often historically faced significant challenges in having their perspectives heard in collective deliberations about housing.

With regard to the specific motion and letter sent from the Glenbrooke North Residents Association about the ALT project, it is worth noting that the vote on the motion to declare community opposition included 74 in favour of the motion and 40 against the motion at a meeting where the Zoom platform restrictions limited participation to 100 accounts (source: <https://sites.google.com/site/glenbrookenorth/>). There are two reasons that undermine confidence in taking this vote to decisively or accurately represent the will of the neighbourhood. First, the platform restrictions in the meeting meant that some people were turned away, as more than 100 Zoom invites were requested by community members (source: Meeting Minutes, February 11th, 2021 - <https://sites.google.com/site/glenbrookenorth/minutes>). Thus, it was possible that others who were unable to access the meeting would have affected the vote tally differently were a larger meeting able to take place that accommodated as many residents wished to attend and participate. Second, the total population of the Glenbrooke North neighbourhood is in excess of 4000 people (Source: <https://www.newwestcity.ca/database/rte/128301.pdf>); this means that the 74 votes behind the opposition letter represent less than 2% of the neighbourhood's total population. Were these votes to have been obtained through some sort of random sampling process, they might be more objective as an indicator of representative views in the community; rather, the setting of the meeting, coupled with organized opposition to the project, makes it likely that views opposed to the project could be over-represented in this vote relative to the broader population. Thus, this vote cannot reliably be understood as reflective or representative of the will of the broader neighbourhood. This being said, council and staff should certainly weigh this letter in their deliberations, as the input of every member of the community should be heard, including those expressed through resident associations; but the weight given to this letter should reflect the fact that the letter cannot reliably be taken as representative of the will of the community as a whole but rather as indicative only of the views of a particular subset of the neighbourhood.

Objection 6:

This decision should be made by a majority of homeowners in the area around the proposed site of the ALT project.

Reply to Objection 6:

This would be a deeply anti-democratic way to make decisions in the community since it would be to prioritize the perspectives of those who own property over others who do not own property. The privileging of property owners in political decision-making is a legacy of feudal and colonial structures that should be rejected; in a truly democratic society with universal suffrage, political decisions should be made with the input of all groups in the community. Given the ease with which property owners are able to have their views represented in society, there should be special attention given to prioritizing the perspectives of marginalized groups of people (e.g., those with lived and living

experience of housing insecurity) who have often found themselves excluded from political decision-making in various ways.

Objection 7:

Rezoning requires the consent of the neighbourhood where the rezoning will take place.

Reply to Objection 7:

From a legal perspective, this statement is false. From a moral perspective, this statement is questionable. Rezoning decisions fall within the purview of the authority of city council, which makes decisions as representatives of the city as a whole that benefit the city as a whole. Neighbourhoods are not isolated islands unto themselves; rather, they are interdependent – indeed, citizens regularly make use of amenities across a variety of areas of the city. Accordingly, council should make decisions about rezoning from the perspective of how the community as a whole will flourish.

While it is worthwhile for communities to deliberate about what best makes for their collective welfare, which could include discussions about zoning, and to offer their feedback to appropriate levels of government, it is important that such deliberation not devolve into an anti-democratic form of majoritarianism where more powerful groups are able to act in ways that harm the rights and interests of less powerful groups (such as by denying the approval of developments that help to realize the right to housing for those facing housing insecurity). While a basic principle of democracy is the idea that government is legitimated by the consent of the governed, this should be understood in a representative sense where government officials are elected and tasked with making decisions that benefit the community as a whole with a special emphasis on those whose rights are most at risk of being curtailed lest government structures devolve into an oppressive majoritarianism that immiserates and excludes marginalized groups in the community.

Objection 8:

The owners of single-detached homes near the proposed site have worked hard and sacrificed a lot for their homes and deserve to have the character of their neighbourhood maintained.

Reply to Objection 8:

Purchasing and maintaining a home in New Westminster is expensive. Indeed, the benchmark price for a single-detached home in New Westminster is over \$1.2 million and the composite benchmark price across all dwelling types is over \$700k (source: https://www.rebgv.org/content/dam/rebgv_org_content/pdfs/monthly-stats-packages/2021-April-REBGV-Stats-Pkg.pdf). Given the lack of proportionality between housing prices and local incomes – the average household income in New Westminster

is roughly \$80k (Source: 2016 Census) – it is unsurprising that approximately 24% of homeowners spend more than 30% of their income on housing, which is a marker of financial stress related to housing affordability. While it is worth recognizing these challenges, it is important to bear in mind that the situation around housing affordability is even worse for renters: indeed, approximately 40% of renters in New Westminster spend more than 30% of their income on housing. (Source: <http://communityhealth.phsa.ca/HealthProfiles/PdfGenerator/New%20Westminster>) This means that renters generally spend a greater proportion of their income on housing than homeowners and that our response to housing insecurity in New Westminster should prioritize the needs of renters who would benefit from the provision of affordable housing. To alleviate housing insecurity, neighbourhoods should do what they can to ensure that affordable rental units – such as the ALT project – are developed throughout the city.

With respect to the issue of work, property, and merit, it is worth noting that we often tend to overestimate the extent to which the distribution of resources in society reflects the work effort of individuals. Instead, the difference between economic security and economic insecurity is largely a product of circumstance and relative brute luck advantages. Indeed, working poverty is on the rise in Metro Vancouver, including New Westminster, and this is a problem that has been exacerbated by the growth of low-wage precarious forms of work coupled with the unaffordability of housing (source: https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/BC%20Office/2016/06/CCPA_Working_poverty_full.pdf). It is a pernicious myth that those who face housing insecurity do so as a result of their own personal failure to work hard enough; rather, the problem here is systemic in our broader economy and thus beyond the control of any one individual. Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to create a more just economy where individuals are able to access secure housing more easily; to do so, we must ensure the development of a greater supply of affordable housing.

Lastly, the moral character of a neighbourhood is more important than its aesthetic character. See the following objection and reply for further elaboration.

Objection 9:

The development of the ALT project will harm the character of the neighbourhood.

Reply to Objection 9:

Most charitably understood, this objection understands “character” in terms of aesthetics and architecture. The moral character of a neighbourhood, however, is much more important than its aesthetic character. While beauty in architectural design is certainly valuable within the urban landscape – it is worth noting, though, that the proposed design of the ALT project is certainly aesthetically pleasing from an architectural perspective – what is most important is the beauty of a community that

welcomes and includes diverse groups of people, that promotes the common welfare of all, and that uses its collective energies to care for those who suffer from various forms of immiseration and indignity, such as housing insecurity. When we fight merely to protect our own narrow advantage, we fall short of the generosity of spirit and imagination that makes our community a joyful and life-giving place for all. It would be so much better if our collective conversation right now were focused not on fighting about this particular project but rather envisioning how these types of projects could be built throughout the city and how we could best welcome our new neighbours at these sites into the common life of our community.

Less charitably understood, it is worth noting that the objection described above may be advanced by some in a way that involves racist and classist undertones that should be rejected and have no place in the inclusive and welcoming community that New Westminster aims to be. In our fragmented and individualistic society, it is all too easy to look at one another with fear and suspicion, especially across differences and especially in the midst of the current pandemic; instead, we should recognize our interdependence, strive to break down barriers and divisions, and work to find ways to more deeply know, understand, and care for one another.

Objection 10:

The ALT project will increase vehicle traffic and parking demand in the area.

Reply to Objection 10:

Average weekday traffic on the major streets adjoining the proposed development site is the following (based on data from 2006-2018): Eighth Ave – 15367 cars; Sixth Street – 11085 cars; and Tenth Avenue – 22751 cars (source: <http://opendata.newwestcity.ca/datasets/traffic-volumes>). The proposed site includes 96 units, which will add proportionally little traffic to these major thoroughfares. In terms of the lane usage related to the proposed site, a traffic study has shown that the ALT building would have the effect of increasing net lane traffic by 10 vehicle trips in peak AM and PM hours from the current 33-36 vehicle trips during those hours to a future 43-46 total vehicle trips once the building is completed and occupied. This would yield a rough total of 400 vehicle trips per day, which would be well within the parameters of the up to 500 vehicle trips per day that the lane is designed to accommodate (source: Development Services Report in May 3 Agenda Package - https://www.newwestcity.ca/city_hall/council_agendas_meetings/council-meeting-agendas-reports-minutes).

In terms of parking, the building would require a variance as the current proposal has 49 fewer parking spaces (roughly 50% of what would be stipulated within relevant bylaw provisions); but the proposal includes a number of strategies to mitigate the parking impact such as by provisioning bicycle parking and storage spaces well in excess of bylaw

requirements, including a Modo car share space and providing memberships to 63 of the residents, and employing paid parking to incentivize lower demand.

Broadly speaking, rental housing, especially affordable housing, has been shown to have lower rates of vehicle use and less demand for parking. The best approach to dealing with concerns about traffic volume is not to restrict development, especially of affordable housing units, but rather to employ the measures proposed for the ALT project and to encourage greater investment in public transportation, to densify in ways that accommodate more foot and bicycle traffic, and to explore strategies such as mobility pricing to incentivize traffic away from high congestion areas.

It is worth noting that it does not display a NIMBY (“not in my backyard”) disposition to simply voice concerns, and residents should have their concerns heard and addressed where possible. It does, however, reflect such a disposition to persist in those concerns once they have been addressed (and shown to be manageable) or where those concerns are taken to have greater precedence than the needs of those facing housing insecurity.

Objection 11:

The ALT project will cast shadows onto adjoining lots.

Reply to Objection 11:

The ALT project design takes into account shadows from the building on the adjoining lots. The building will be set toward the sidewalk on Sixth Street with greenspace in the back and will be sloped down to adjacent houses. This design will minimize the shadows from the building onto adjoining lots. (Note: shadow analysis has been done twice and is available at <https://www.becardnewwest.ca/823-841-sixth-st>)

Again, it is worth noting that it does not display a NIMBY (“not in my backyard”) disposition to simply voice concerns, and residents should have their concerns heard and addressed where possible. It does, however, reflect such a disposition to persist in those concerns once they have been addressed (and shown to be manageable) or where those concerns are taken to have greater precedence than the needs of those facing housing insecurity.

Objection 12:

The ALT project is a great idea, but it is being proposed in the wrong location.

Reply to Objection 12:

This specific site is an ideal location for the ALT project: it is close to schools (and supported by the New Westminster school board); it is close to parks and playgrounds;

it is a pedestrian-friendly area; it is well served by public transit; it is on a major street, which is higher density to the north and south; and it is close to many amenities. The ALT project is a great idea in a great location.

The “great idea, bad location” line of reasoning is not a universalizable form of reasoning. If every neighbourhood advanced the same reasoning, it would be to effectively exclude certain demographics of people from New Westminster and exacerbate rather than alleviate the housing crisis in our area. Our approach to zoning and development should be inclusionary rather than exclusionary in seeking to welcome all demographics across the city. The reality is that we need many more developments such as the ALT project to respond to the immense challenge of housing insecurity in New Westminster and the surrounding region. Accordingly, we need to be thinking about how affordable housing can be built in all areas of the city, including along Sixth Street.

Objection 13:

Homeowners near the proposed location have purchased property based on the understanding that the area along Sixth Street between Eighth Avenue and Tenth Avenue would not be densified beyond the infill townhouses identified in the Land Use Designation Map of the OCP.

Reply to Objection 13:

From a legal perspective, the Land Use Designation Map of the OCP is not a binding document that the city is compelled to strictly uphold without possibility of amendment; rather, the OCP is an aspirational and amendable planning document, including the Land Use Designation Map, which is derivative of the OCP’s policy goals. From both a moral and pragmatic perspective, the city’s decisions around rezoning and development should certainly be principled and not arbitrary; indeed, it is reasonable for all residents of New Westminster, including homeowners, to expect consistency with the OCP in decisions made by council and staff. Furthermore, homeowners should be consulted about rezoning decisions and should have their concerns heard and addressed where possible. But given the precedence of the policy goals within the OCP (including with respect to the Land Use Designation Map), consistency with the OCP should be understood first and foremost in terms of those policy goals, such as the provision of affordable housing; thus, it would be unreasonable to hold that a limited number of property-purchasing decisions (which may have been based on what is essentially an aspirational and revisable map) should be prioritized over the broader policy goal of realizing the increased development of affordable housing projects in various neighbourhoods in New Westminster, especially given the significant prevalence of housing insecurity in the region. Finally, the approval of the ALT project would be principled and not arbitrary for the reasons given in C6 above.

Objection 14:

The opposition to this project is broadly supportive of the goals of affordable housing and reconciliation but is solely concerned with the issue of densification at the proposed location.

Reply to Objection 14:

Some opponents to the ALT project may assert that they support affordable housing and reconciliation in principle but that they simply oppose the densification at the proposed location that would be necessary to accommodate the project in its proposed form. It is important to note that every member of the community, including opponents of the project, should be treated respectfully and should not be derided as being radically opposed to affordable housing and reconciliation simply for expressing concerns about density.

But it is also important to recognize that, if the opposition to the project were to be successful in preventing this project from going ahead, it would have the effect of conflicting with the goals of realizing affordable housing and reconciliation in New Westminster. There are two basic reasons why this is the case and why the view presented in the objection above is problematic. First, to support something meaningfully in principle requires supporting that thing in practice where possible; to give support to an issue in a way that says “yes” to doing something about that issue when it is at a remove but “no” when doing something directly affects one’s life or neighbourhood is ultimately not to give complete support to that issue. For the support of affordable housing and reconciliation to be complete, community members in the adjoining neighbourhoods should work together to find solutions to the perceived challenges of densification at the proposed site and collectively seek to welcome their new neighbours in a spirit of generosity in order to realize the goods of affordable housing and reconciliation within the community. Second, to oppose the means necessary to realize an end (or by which that end would most reasonably be realized) is to effectively oppose the realization of that end. If densification in the form of multi-unit buildings is necessary to realize affordable housing projects that provide meaningful relief to the challenges of housing insecurity, opposition to densification would essentially mean opposition to affordable housing (and, in the specific case of the ALT project, affordable housing consonant with the value of reconciliation). Given the paucity of land within New Westminster, it is reasonable to hold that densification is necessary for the provision of affordable housing to address the significant problem of housing insecurity in our region. For these reasons, the issues of densification, affordable housing, and reconciliation are interconnected and cannot be considered in isolation from one another with regard to the ALT project.

Objection 15:

While the social purpose of the ALT project is laudable, it is contrary to urban planning best practices to place a building of this size adjacent to single-family homes and the proposed building conflicts with the city's guidelines for massing, transition, and setbacks.

Reply to Objection 15:

In terms of massing, transition, and setback, it is worth noting that the design of the ALT project has the building step down to four stories on its east and west sides to better transition to adjacent properties and possible future adjacent massing in townhome development that could occur beside the building. The building will also be located as close as possible to Sixth Street to maximize the distance between it and single-detached dwellings across the lane to the north; the preservation of trees on the north side of the property will further minimize impacts on houses across the lane.

For reasons outlined above (see section C6), it makes sense to densify the Sixth Street corridor between Eighth and Tenth Avenues and that densification needs to begin somewhere. The ALT project is a great opportunity to densify along that corridor in a way that provides much-needed affordable housing and advances the goals of reconciliation, equity, and inclusion. Furthermore, urban planning best practices must prioritize equitable densification in order to ensure the provision of affordable housing in our community (see also Reply to Objection 3 above).

Objection 16:

It is possible for the city to provide affordable housing in ways that everyone in the community can support, which would be the case if the city were to prevent the ALT project in its proposed site and prioritize the development of larger buildings with affordable housing in places that are not directly adjacent to single-detached homes.

Reply to Objection 16:

If our response to housing insecurity in our region is to be meaningful, we must ensure that the stock of affordable housing grows in relative share as a proportion of the total stock of housing in the region, especially in the midst of population growth and densification. This means that we must take a "both-and" approach here: we should continue to push for the inclusion of as much affordable housing as possible in large development areas, especially near SkyTrain stations; but it is also important to densify along busier corridors such as Sixth Street – given the large share of land in New Westminster devoted to single-detached homes, this will involve some encroaching upon areas of single-detached homes.

While it is true that many of the single-detached neighbourhoods in New Westminster are architecturally and aesthetically beautiful, the reality is that we must think creatively about densification in many different areas of our city if we as a community are to do our part in addressing serious challenges that surround us. Taking action to address the challenge of housing insecurity involves supporting developments such as the ALT project in its proposed location. Taking action to address the challenge of food security involves preventing sprawl onto important farmland in the Fraser Valley, especially given the current and future problems of saltwater intrusion on coastal farmland amidst rising sea levels. Taking action to address the challenge of climate change involves supporting densification in terms of promoting efficiencies in public transit and the use of various resources. Taking action to ensure equity in housing, so that lower-wage workers are not forced to commute long distances and are able to live in the communities in which they work, involves supporting densification.

It is worth emphasizing that resistance to densification is understandable in the sense that it involves change, which can yield fear and uncertainty in local residents. But a healthy community seeks to meet the challenges that it faces rather than to flee from them. We should find unity in seeking creative and inclusive approaches to densification that help to meet the challenges we face in our collective life together and in our relationship to the natural world that sustains us. Supporting the ALT project is a step in the right direction, and it would be beautiful to find unity as a community in encouraging this kind of densification.

Objection 17:

It is unfair that occupancy of the units in the ALT project would be restricted to Indigenous and Swahili peoples, which conflicts with an inclusive approach to housing.

Reply to Objection 17:

A genuinely inclusive approach to housing requires a commitment to equity; to ensure that all groups in society have equal access to secure housing, it is necessary to prioritize certain groups who experience proportionally higher rates of housing insecurity, such as Indigenous and Swahili peoples. Indeed, it is important to recognize the racialized dimensions of poverty in Canada (and for a broad profile of poverty in Canada that includes these dimensions, see the following resource: <https://cwp-csp.ca/poverty/just-the-facts/>). Furthermore, in the most recent homeless count in Metro Vancouver, individuals who identified as Indigenous and individuals who identified as Black were both significantly overrepresented relative to their share of the general population in the region (source: https://www.vancitycommunityfoundation.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/HC2020_Final_Report.pdf). While we should support the widespread development of affordable housing throughout the region (such that no one in our communities has to face housing insecurity), it is appropriate for developments to go ahead such as the ALT project that

prioritize certain demographics that are most significantly impacted by housing insecurity.

Objection 18:

The ALT project will open up further development that could enrich developers and speculators who are more interested in profit than the welfare of the community.

Reply to Objection 18:

It is definitely worth recognizing that the primary value of housing is intrinsic in giving us security, comfort, and a sense of place. Speculative activities in the housing market – where housing is seen simply as a commodity – contribute to the unaffordability of housing and can harm the community by increasing housing insecurity. The response to speculative activities should be twofold: first, there should be robust regulation of the housing market that prioritizes the intrinsic value of housing for residents above the investment value of housing for speculators; and second, the stock of affordable housing in New Westminster needs to increase on a regular basis to ensure that everyone has the ability to access secure housing. But opposing the development of the ALT project would be counterproductive to these aims. To combat the negative effects of speculation, we need to ensure that developments such as the ALT project are built in greater proportion in the housing stock in New Westminster.

With regard to this specific project, it is worth noting that the developer is a non-profit society focused on building affordable housing. The Aboriginal Land Trust is a non-profit society and subsidiary of [Lu'ma Native Housing Society](#), and the [Swahili Vision International Association](#) is a collaborating partner on the project. The conversation would be different if the proposal under consideration was for luxury units built by a for-profit developer. It is important to recognize that the plan for the ALT project is to create a comprehensive development zone specific to the project and for the building to be held in trust such that affordable rentals are preserved over the life of the building. This project is not about giving *carte blanche* to for-profit developers in the area to do as they please but rather about providing much needed affordable housing for our community. The right response to for-profit development is for it to be regulated for the good of the community and to ensure that the net stock of affordable housing units, especially those proposed by non-profit societies and developers, increases relative to the overall stock of housing in the city. Approving developments such as the ALT project is the right response to housing insecurity in the region.

Objection 19:

The ALT project should be opposed because it will both increase crime and decrease property values in the area.

Reply to Objection 19:

The research consensus on non-market housing projects shows that they do not generally have an adverse effect on either crime rates or property values. In fact, many of these projects both decrease overall crime rates in an area and contribute to increased property values in the surrounding neighbourhood. (See the following resources: (1) BC Housing Property Values Case Study Series: <https://www.bchousing.org/research-centre/library/community-acceptance/property-values-case-study-series&sortBy=sortByDate>; and (2) Yes in My Backyard Research and Policy: <https://yesinmybackyard.ca/research-and-policy/>). Furthermore, mixed-income neighbourhoods with a variety of tenure types (freehold, strata, co-op, rentals, etc.) that prioritize high-quality affordable housing and an inclusionary approach have many positive social outcomes (see, for instance, the following article: <https://www.utoronto.ca/news/mixed-income-housing-one-answer-out-control-home-prices>). Finally, this type of objection can sometimes be advanced in a stigmatizing way driven by false stereotypes that fail to engage the relevant facts and research on the topic and that fail to move beyond simplistic anecdotes to respectfully hear the real and complete stories of those who would benefit from affordable housing. The truth is that the ALT project should not be seen as a source of fear but rather as a source of hope in how our community can be made even more beautiful, just, and welcoming.

Objection 20:

The costs of this project will be borne by taxpayers, including municipal taxpayers in New Westminster, which is an unfair way to distribute public economic resources.

Reply to Objection 20:

The ALT project has applied for funding from BC Housing's Community Housing Fund to support the construction of the building. The proposal under consideration also involves the City of New Westminister contributing \$631,000 toward offsite servicing and infrastructure costs. This contribution from the city would be divided up in the following way: up to \$100,000 from the Electrical Utility fund to support utility requirements; up to \$115,000 from the Uptown Streetscape Vision fund to support the multi-use pathway and cycling infrastructure; and up to \$415,000 from the Affordable Housing Reserve Fund to be reallocated from another project no longer proceeding in 2021 (source: Development Services Report in May 3 Agenda Package - https://www.newwestcity.ca/city_hall/council_agendas_meetings/council-meeting-agendas-reports-minutes). Given the federal and provincial contributions to the

Community Housing Fund, this project would involve support from all levels of government if it is approved and successful in its application for funding.

To think through this objection carefully, it is worth looking at the concept of “taxpayer” that is sometimes used in discussions of public spending. The basic picture that we have is that governments primarily either tax or borrow in order to spend and that taxpayers contribute to government revenue used for public spending. From this basic picture, some may be tempted to draw the conclusion that those who pay more in taxes contribute more to society and thus should be entitled to more of a say in how spending is allocated. But this conclusion does not follow and should be rejected.

Tax revenue comes in different forms at different levels of government, all of which complicates a simple dichotomy of “us” vs “them” definitions of “taxpayer”. It is not strictly necessary for the federal government to raise taxes or even take on debt in order to engage in public spending – indeed, much of the federal government’s pandemic relief spending was primarily facilitated by the Bank of Canada’s expansion of the money supply through a process known as “quantitative easing” (for more, see the following resource: <https://monitormag.ca/articles/canada-joins-the-qe-club-what-is-quantitative-easing-and-what-comes-next/>). The province raises revenue through both income taxes and sales taxes, among other sources: while income taxes are set progressively so that higher income brackets are taxed at a proportionally higher rate, sales taxes are regressive in the sense that those with lower incomes pay proportionally more by spending a greater share of their income on the consumption of goods and services than those with higher incomes (especially those whose income is derived from various forms of capital – e.g., property, stocks, etc.). The upshot is that there is no simple category of “taxpayer” when it comes to provincial and federal spending that would entitle any one particular group of people to claim to have a greater say in the allocation of this spending. Furthermore, it would be deeply anti-democratic for political decision-making to give greater weight to the views of those with a greater amount of economic resources; in fact, considerations of equity would entail that the views of those with fewer economic resources should be weighted most heavily in political decision-making processes given the various forms of political exclusion that individuals with lived and living experience of economic insecurity have experienced.

At the municipal level, it is also problematic to hold an “us” vs “them” approach to the definition of “taxpayer”, where one might be tempted to hold that the perspectives of property owners should be given greater weight because they pay the property taxes that make up a significant portion of municipal revenue. This view is deeply problematic for three basic reasons. First, while property owners directly pay property taxes to the city, renters indirectly contribute to property tax payments through their rent. Accordingly, both property owners and renters should be seen as making contributions to municipal revenues. Second, while it is good to pay taxes, it is problematic to see this as the sole or primary way that one contributes to one’s community. Indeed, we contribute to our communities by doing things such as working in ways that benefit

others around us, volunteering in local organizations, or caring for others in our neighbourhood in a variety of different ways. Third, for political decision-making to be genuinely democratic, it must seek to include all voices, with special attention given to those voices that face various forms of social exclusion. With respect to the ALT project, this means that all residents should be free to voice their perspectives to the city but that special consideration needs to be given to the perspectives of those in the Indigenous and Swahili communities who face disproportionately higher rates of housing insecurity and the attendant barriers to political participation that come from housing insecurity and other forms of marginalization.

Lastly, our view of what justice demands in the allocation of public spending should be informed by a commitment to ensure the basic rights of all in our community, including the right to adequate housing. We are not independent beings who live in isolation from one another; rather, we are interdependent beings with shared vulnerabilities, and we flourish as a community when we all care for another. Given our interdependence, it is problematic to hold that economic and social risks should be borne primarily by the individual; instead, these risks need to be collectively shared and addressed in a range of areas including health security, food security, and housing security, among others. In terms of housing, this means that public spending should be allocated toward ensuring that everyone has access to adequate housing. Ideally, different levels of government in Canada should work together on a large-scale plan to significantly increase the stock of affordable housing in all areas of the country, including New Westminster, to ensure that no one faces housing insecurity. The reality is that we already spend a great deal of money dealing with the symptoms of homelessness and housing insecurity – \$55,000 per homeless person in Metro Vancouver – when it would be both more economically efficient and more respectful of human dignity to simply house people securely (source: <http://www.metrovancouver.org/services/regional-planning/homelessness/homelessness-taskforce/crisis/Pages/default.aspx>). In practice, we as individual citizens can work to support affordable housing projects across our region, including the ALT project, which is a step in the right direction in providing secure housing to 96 more individuals and families in our area.