



Building Better Homes and Communities

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ACT Solutions

Supportive Housing for Seniors Richmond, BC

Issue

With the seniors' population in Richmond, BC, expected to double from 10 per cent in 2000 to 20 per cent by 2020, the City of Richmond wanted to ensure its goals, policies and priorities encouraged a range of housing options for seniors.

In particular, it wanted to encourage the availability of supportive housing at different levels of affordability and support. Since the city is about 40 per cent farmland and also contains a substantial flood plain, it favoured an urban intensification approach, specifically the redevelopment of existing seniors' housing and the use of underdeveloped sites.

In 2000, supportive housing for seniors was still a relatively new concept, with many issues in need of clarification. These included determining the types of services required and actions the municipality could take to facilitate development.

Plan

The ACT project team set out to:

- determine the community's need for supportive housing,
- develop a practical model to meet the need,
- identify actions the City could take in policy, regulatory and land use areas.

Project team

City of Richmond
Richmond Seniors Advisory Council
Greater Vancouver Home Builders' Association
Richmond Health Services Long Term Care
Vancouver/ Richmond Health Board
Greater Vancouver Housing Corporation
Developer: Progressive Homes



Oak Tree House, Richmond

Source: www.oaktreehouse.com

Results

The project team's report presents a comprehensive overview of seniors' supportive housing — what it is, what supports are provided and important design considerations — coupled with specific requirements for planning, developing and operating this type of housing in Richmond.

The report contains general information that would benefit any group or municipality investigating the need for supportive housing.

The team made several specific recommendations to Richmond Council for regulatory changes that

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would encourage the development of supportive seniors housing. It asked the City to:

- ❑ formally acknowledge seniors supportive housing as a priority within the Official Community Plan,
- ❑ develop general development and design guidelines for seniors supportive housing;
- ❑ proactively acquire land through large-scale rezoning, and other purchase opportunities, and designate appropriate sites for affordable seniors supportive housing;
- ❑ evaluate the feasibility of tools such as zoning changes, zoning relaxation, density bonuses, development charge rebates and so on to enhance the development and affordability of seniors supportive housing;
- ❑ develop an appreciation for how various regulations and operational considerations, such as licensing, and funding affect the City's roles and objectives with respect to seniors supportive housing.

In response to these recommendations, the City amended its Official Plan to state that seniors supportive housing is a municipal priority. In November 2002, the City approved a set of design guidelines called *Affordable Seniors Supportive Housing Design Guidelines*, which are available on-line at www.city.richmond.ca. The City has also banked, over several years, land for future affordable housing projects of all types.

Kari Huhtala, Senior Policy Planner for the municipality, reports that two seniors' supportive projects have been built in the three years since the design guidelines were approved — Oak Tree House with 38 units and Reverend Lee with 65 units. Both rent at the lower end of market.

Huhtala said there is a great deal of interest in this type of housing from developers but, without senior government support, it is hard to make it affordable in a market where land is expensive and construction is booming.

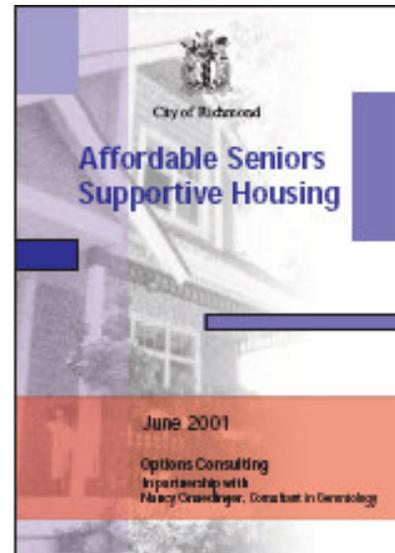
Related report

City of Richmond: Affordable Seniors Supportive Housing (Options Consulting in partnership with Nancy Gnaedinger, Consultant in Gerontology, 2001)

This report is available from the ACT website. See "ACT projects & solutions".

Contact

Kari Huhtala, Senior Policy Planner, Policy Planning, Urban Development Division, City of Richmond
Khuhtala@richmond.ca
(604) 276-4188



Project report

Source: City of Richmond

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ACT Administration

c/o The Federation of Canadian Municipalities
Tel: 613-241-5221 ext. 242
Fax: 613-244-1515
E-mail: info@actprogram.com

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