

SALN

Self Advocate Leadership Network British Columbia

September 7, 2021

SALN COVID-19 News-sheet #13: The need for affordable housing is critical.

This News-sheet is a public document. Information, quotes, and questions are invited to be shared and included outside of SALN.

The majority of SALN members are part of provincial self-advocacy and advisory groups. SALN is aware and interested in the BC self-advocate movement. All SALN members are well-established and recognizable. All SALN members are from leading groups in the movement.

SALN Mission Statement:

To promote a good life through positive and informed: actions, networking and advocacy.

SALN would like to share the following:

SALN is disappointed, disillusioned, baffled and frustrated the Mayor of Surrey and 4 Councilors, on July 26, 2021, did not approve Harmony Apartments.

What is "Harmony apartments"? (information from UNITI publications)

- UNITI in South Surrey, is currently trying to build at 6-storey, 91-rental home affordable and inclusive apartment called Harmony that fits in Surrey's plans for the area and will provide desperately needed housing for people being priced out to their community.
- Harmony is housing that is reflective of the community; it is for families, students, essential workers, seniors, people with disabilities and more. Harmony will be reflective of the South Surrey community and that means the tenants who live in Harmony will come from a variety of backgrounds. Harmony will reach out and provide opportunities for those who are being forced out or are not included in the community.
- Harmony is an inclusive building that is accessible to all people. With Harmony, people with disabilities will get the chance to live the life they want.

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- Harmony will allow those who have worked, played and lived in South Surrey, be able to afford to stay living in South Surrey.
- **Affordable housing is hard to come by but is needed now more than ever.**

<https://uniti4all.com/harmony/>

Details of statement:

According to Metro Vancouver, Surrey was short 15,000 below market rental homes in 2020. An additional 20,000 homes will be needed in the next 10 years.

International human rights law acknowledges everyone’s right to an adequate standard of living, which includes the right to adequate housing. This is a fundamental/basic right for all people.

Many Surrey citizens said they support affordable and inclusive housing. Support of Harmony includes the following – which is why we are struggling to understand why Harmony was not approved:



Overwhelming Community Support for Harmony

Communication Form	Support	Opposed	Concerned
Petitions	6,040	415	0
Correspondences	463	120	45
Calls into Public Hearing	67	9	0
TOTAL	6,570	545	45



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Why, when so many people in Surrey need affordable housing and there was so much support for Harmony, would the mayor and 4 of the councilors vote against the project, and not give a reason or explanation?

We would like to thank Councilors Hundial, Locke and Pettigrew for listening to the community and voting to pass Harmony.

(from UNITI publication)...There is Provincial and National Support for Harmony. While there is very strong local support for Harmony in Surrey, UNITI has also received support from two organizations that understand that housing is a human right: Inclusion BC and Inclusion Canada. In their joint letter to Council in support of Harmony, their leadership stated the following:

"Harmony is at the forefront of creating affordable and inclusive housing for South Surrey residents and has the potential to be the heartbeat of the community. A community where diversity, including people with intellectual disabilities, is not just reflected but is celebrated through the composition of those who reside within the building itself."

- Karla Verschoor (Executive Director, Inclusion BC) & Krista Carr (Executive VP, Inclusion Canada)

<https://inclusionbc.org/>

<https://inclusioncanada.ca/>

SALN Comments:

- July 26, 2021 was a sad day for Surrey. We will continue to see our neighbours, grandparents, parents, sons, daughters, friends, seniors, young families, people with disabilities, students and essential workers priced out of THEIR community because there are no affordable rentals. What happened on July 26 is devastating.
- There is a lack of affordable and suitable housing in Surrey, let alone British Columbia.
- People with disabilities have the right to live in their own community. This includes living in their own home that is affordable and inclusive.
- Affordable housing is a need, is a right, within this Province – for people to be able to live in their own home.

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- People with disabilities need housing and want to move out into their own home. My heart and soul goes out to those who are in need of housing like Harmony.
- What is the point of a society if everyone does not have a home?
- Are we putting height of the building above people's right to shelter?
- When I heard it failed – I thought this is a good human rights issue. Housing is a human rights issue – everyone has the right to have an affordable place to live.
- I feel aghast. Right now, where are these people going to go? Where are they going to live?
- This is such a wrong decision – there are so many things wrong with it.
- Surrey is making a bad example for the rest of the Province – we worry that other municipalities might do the same thing.
- Every community is dealing with these issues – this sets a precedent for what Surrey has done.
- It is a slap in the face of every person who lives on a fixed income in this Province – and specifically the people who live in Surrey. I would like to see people try to live on what we have to live on.
- Has the Mayor and councilors ever experienced living on a low income? Ever tried to find an affordable place to live and call home?
- Everyone needs to vote at the next election – and keep this terrible decision in mind when they vote.
- The City of Surrey has the highest rate of child poverty in metro Vancouver cities. This shows the critical need for affordable housing. To end the plan for one is shameful.
- Federal government is providing funding for affordable housing – why would Surrey put the rights of all Canadian citizens to have safe affordable shelter and put aesthetics ahead?
- Why can't we lift people up instead of tear them down? We must put density, height, parking and traffic worries aside and put human beings first.

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#WeNeedHarmony

UNITI's Public Statement after the July 26 decision...

We are saddened that despite overwhelming public support, Harmony was not approved by Surrey Council.

We are heartened by the outpouring of community support both before and during the public hearing. It is clear that the type of housing we want to build is supported and needed. We remain thoroughly committed to bringing affordable and inclusive housing to South Surrey as part of our responsibility as stewards of Peninsula Estates' wonderful 5.5-acre property. We want to assure the tenants who call Peninsula Estates home that we will never sell the property and assure the community that we will continue to advocate and work for the housing you've told us you need.

Thank you all for your support. We will rest for a bit before connecting with you again to work together creating a healthy and inclusive community that will benefit us all.

UNITI

B.C. housing project runs up against suburban opposition: Globe and Mail:

https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/british-columbia/article-bc-housing-projects-run-up-against-suburban-opposition/?fbclid=IwAR0zQsGa9XNMIqs_TcOA0gd-67TIkWNhtR_1cYH2BQu_HCpaL8k_RHHbEmI

