



April 16, 2021

St Peter & St Paul Housing and Ministry Centre Plans Fall Through

In a letter dated April 9, 2021 to the Parish of St Peter & St Paul in Esquimalt, Bishop Anna Greenwood-Lee notified parishioners that a project, which would have seen the development of a 24-unit affordable housing complex erected above a new parish ministry centre, is not proceeding.

“I am writing with a heavy heart, to inform you that, due to circumstances beyond our control, the affordable housing project BC Housing approved to proceed to feasibility on November 9, 2018, which was to be erected on the parish property (1379 Esquimalt Rd), is not going to be realized. There are multiple reasons for this, but the 24-unit project no longer meets the financial threshold for what BC Housing and the diocese can commit to for such projects,” said Greenwood-Lee in the opening paragraph of the letter.

In partnering with BC Housing, the diocese had hoped that leveraging the value in its land (\$1m) and providing a cash investment of \$250,000 (which was increased to \$710,142 in November 2020) would make possible the development of an otherwise unaffordable ministry centre (which would be located on the ground floor of the building), while also supporting community efforts to provide much-needed affordable housing in the Township of Esquimalt. “This was to be a win-win situation for everyone,” says Greenwood-Lee, “but, with skyrocketing building costs and excessive delays, the project could no longer be considered affordable and therefore is not feasible.”

“This is heartbreaking news for the parish, which has, since 2010 hoped for a solution to its need for a new parish hall. The ministry centre was to be a community hub—our offering to the neighbourhood, where people from all walks of life could gather, and the parish community could continue to live out its vision to embrace and spread God’s love,” says Gail Rodger, incumbent of St Peter & St Paul.

“In recent years, the diocese has had to come to terms with the fact that development projects like this one are far more fraught and complicated than we are equipped to undertake. We don’t have the deep pockets necessary to see a housing project through from feasibility to completion. We need to focus our efforts on the ministry we are called to and find other ways to support those who are better equipped to address the housing crisis in the province. This is a hard lesson to learn, and I am truly sorry for how this long road has ended for the people of the parish,” says Greenwood-Lee.

With the development of the new ministry centre not proceeding, the bishop, archdeacon and synod staff will work with parish leadership to determine the way forward for St Peter & St Paul.