

An interview with Olympic Villiage resident

JESICA LIVINGSTON MCLEOD

[Full Transcript]

Interviewer:

My name is Trisha McCauley, today's date is the 23rd, the 3rd of 2022. I am interviewing Jessica Livingston McLeod for Heritage project, as part of the Newham heritage month, 2022. So Jessica, please can you confirm your name, your age and your date of birth.

Jesica: Yes. I'm Jessica Livingston McLeod, I'm 38 years old, and I was born on 21st April, 1983.

Interviewer: Thank you. So could you please tell me your story about the Olympics, leading up to 2012.

Jesica: So I had a bad perspective of the area back in 2012 especially from my family living here, it was an area that you shouldn't come to, so East from London. But we knew that the properties are way cheaper, so it was an area to invest. But it was great to see the change in 2012, where the park was rebuilt and everything was so bright, and new and bringing people to the area so that was great and the expansion. After seeing new properties, new like cafes and restaurants that I love and art activities, more like artistic activities, that was a huge plus. That's why we decided to start renting in this village, in Get Living London. We loved the experience, and then we bought a property in the area. But the negative part, I'm very positive about the changes, the negative part was the gentrification and the increased cost of living and the properties in general.

Interviewer: Okay. So how long have you been living in the area now?

Jesica: Now, since almost five years. I was living in Bow before, and then in a Victoria station around Victoria station.

Interviewer: Okay. So have things you feel improved, do you have a community where you are?

Jesica: Yes. So that's the other extremely positive part, then this village community has a lot of activities like board game club or movie nights. Like we are constantly caring about our neighbours. I always knew of my neighbours in my floor, and now it is a four floors building. So we know all the neighbours, we are constantly talking with each other, and we even fight things together. Like I was talking about the London legacy agency we have to support it, when you own a property in the area, you need to pay every month to them. So we're trying to get rid of that. Or at least, get something in return from supporting the public park. So that's an organisation with all the neighbours getting together, and trying to see like the legal stuff and all that. So the community is amazing.

Interviewer: That's fantastic. So you visit the park often?

Jesica: Yes, every day.

Interviewer: Every day.

Jesica: Especially during COVID.

Interviewer: So what's your favourite part of the park?

Jesica: Now, the new part that has the cherry blossoms, the one that is to commemorate the people who die of COVID, and what happened during the pandemic. We had a super cute activity where we were able to plant, like help, there were some like patches where you can plant your plants there, so it's kind of a team activity. So because you're supporting the park also, hands-on.

Interviewer: Did you actually get the chance to go to the Olympic events?

Jesica: No, I'm not a very sporty person. However, I did go to, there were some really cool festivals arcadia and funky town it's called, there were outdoors in the park, they were amazing. I'm going to see the foo fighters and red-hot chili peppers in the stadium, but I'm not a super sporty person. But I use the aquatic arena, so I use the facilities and the gym and all that.

Interviewer: Okay. Well, thank you so much. Is there anything else you'd like to add about your experience living in the Olympic Park?

Jesica: I think overall, it's a great park, and I hope they keep it as a park, because I know there are plans of building more in the park areas. The good thing is that it's open, and that's what makes it different from other parks in London, if they start adding more buildings that will change, so I hope that won't be the case.

Interviewer: Okay. Well, thank you Jesica, and thank you for sharing your story. Thank you very much.

Jesica Thank you.