

**Subject: Affordable Housing;**

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There was a great deal of talk about "Affordable" Housing during the last election. Unfortunately the two minute time limit to respond to questions during the all candidates meetings was not sufficient. The subject is important. All market housing is affordable of course. If it were not, it would not be built and/or, if built, could not be sold. In such a case, the builder would be obliged to reduce the price to a level where it sells and/or is "affordable". That goes for the cheapest as well as the most expensive housing. This is rudimentary market economics.

The term affordable is, therefore, misleading. What the members of the audience meant by "affordable" I presume was non-profit or non market housing. The hollowness of the term affordable is best demonstrated in the massive reconstruction of the Lynn Valley Core. Construction was pushed under the guise of affordability and pedestrian oriented. It turned out to be no more affordable than any other market housing and it certainly is not pedestrian oriented. Indeed the term pedestrian oriented turned out to be nothing less than a hoax at the expense of the District taxpayers who have to pay the cost for the massive infrastructure required without receiving anything meaningful in return while the developers walked away with the profits.

Market Housing, even that at the very low end, which in the District is in the neighborhood of \$ 150, 000, is beyond the means of many people. The North Shore does provide a fair spectrum of rental accommodations. The City of North Vancouver has built a large number of such dwelling units in the last 15 years although they too are frequently out of reach for people on limited income. Hence the flight into secondary suites and often substandard basement accommodations. Construction of rental accommodations is on the decline. In the City at the same time construction of self owned units is increasing even beyond the needs of North Shore residents. The City of North Vancouver is clearly taking a regional attitude in the provision of housing. The City can do this without incurring additional large costs for recreation, parks, fields and even infrastructure such as roads. Being in close proximity to the District such facilities exist and in many instances are available free of charge to the City.

Of the principle forms of non profit housing there are two. One is Co-op Housing and the other Rental. In the District we have both and both have been successful. Construction of such housing was possible through the CMHC. Fraternal organizations such as the Seymour Lions and the Kiwanis for instance took advantage of available CMHC funding and, with long term leased land provided by the District, built such housing units.

Most of the problems frequently encountered with non profit rental housing in the District were avoided primarily because of the Lions and Kiwanis good management and because the units were modest in numbers in any given neighborhood. As for Co-op housing, it too has been extremely successful. Co-op housing contains the element of ownership although the profit motive is to all intents and purposes absent. Co-op housing in Lynn Valley, for instance, exists without government subsidy. The initial outlay by the government including the cost of land is being paid off with interest much like a mortgage is being paid by any other homeowner. The advantage of co-ops exists simply in that it requires no large down payment while monthly payments are based on income.


The third reason for the success of non profit housing in the District is because projects were built on a modest scale without changing the essential character of existing neighborhoods. The final reason is because they were built with the aim of providing housing for the needs of North Vancouver District rather than the needs of the region. All forms of non profit housing ended when the Federal and Provincial Governments cut funding.

The result is that there is now a need for such housing for our own District residents. To address those needs I have on several occasions proposed that we use our Heritage Fund to provide such housing without becoming a landlord or becoming directly involved in the operation of such projects. This could be done by making 5% of all land we sell available for such housing. The land could be leased for 60 years, as was done with some co-ops, while the housing itself would be financed from the Heritage Fund amortized over a period of 60 years. At the end of the term both the land and the housing would revert back to the District. It would be a win-win situation and address an important need

for our own home grown residents, young and old.

All my efforts failed however. The principle reason is that there was no support forthcoming from any of the representatives of the North Shore Non Profit organizations. The result was that Council did not take my suggestions seriously.

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