

Developer pitches tiny apartments

Affordable units would require city to sell or lease affordable land

BY BRENT RICHTER, NORTH SHORE NEWS APRIL 3, 2013 9:48 AM



A drawing of what a three-storey apartment building containing 375-450-square-foot units might look like.

Photograph by: graphic submitted, for North Shore News

A developer is hoping the City of North Vancouver will sell off a piece of land in order to build small units designed specifically for low-to moderate-income earners wanting to own their own home.

John Kay, president of Affordable Sustainable Housing Ideas Company, made the pitch March 25 to buy or get a 99-year lease on a piece of city-owned land on Alder Street, east of St. Patrick Avenue in order to **build 12 units of housing for people earning \$30,000 to \$40,000 a year.**

"The couple that works at Starbucks at Lonsdale and 13th, or works in daycare or childcare. . . . The idea is to take that dream of home ownership and make it reality - to allow people who have traditionally been renters to become purchasers to build the private equity that goes with owning a home."

Specifically, Kay would like to build 375square foot one-bedroom units to 450-square foot two-bedroom units ranging in price from \$165,000 to \$190,000.

The prices are based on the developer being able to get a piece of land for \$550,000 and council approval for a 5,600-square foot three-storey building.

The building would be **designed to look like a large house** that will blend in with the surrounding neighbourhood, and neighbours would have a direct influence on the design. The overall effect should be housing **that is more attractive and affordable than typical apartment rentals, with none of the stigma**

attached to affordable housing, Kay said.

Council was largely receptive to the idea, but not so much they were willing to do more than ask staff for a future report on the possibility.

For Coun. Pam Bookham, the small, inexpensive units were an idea that deserves to be brought to the community, especially as the city is entering into the third phase of its official community plan review, which deals with land use. But, she added, council shouldn't be entertaining new types of development on a piecemeal basis through the regular rezoning processes. "Ultimately, I think it's for our community to decide what new forms of housing we ought to have and not for any individual council to look at an idea, throw it out for a public hearing and then make a decision," she said.

It was refreshing to see a new solution for affordability being pitched from the private sector, Mayor Darrell Mussatto noted.

"People that have families can't afford a \$1million house. It's just beyond their means, even with an amazingly high-paying job. When you've got a couple kids and you've got payments, it's a tough go of it these days," he said.

For Coun. Craig Keating, the plan represented one side of the balance councils strive for when it comes to affordability versus the willingness for change in a neighbourhood.

"The people want affordability like it was in the 1960s. That is not ever coming back to this community unless of course we begin to change the kinds of dwellings we live in - the amount of dwelling the space we can have."

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