

## **Mayor's Roundtable on Building Affordable and Rental Housing, April 25, 2009**

### **Ned Jacobs, for the Neighbourhoods for a Sustainable Vancouver (NSV) Steering Committee.**

In order to increase the stock of rental and affordable housing, the City must first ensure that measures are in place to prevent the loss of existing rentals. Therefore, there are two aspects to increasing the supply of rental housing; preserving the existing stock and building additional stock.

A) **Preserve the existing rental stock**, which is generally more affordable than new construction, by implementing the following:

- 1) **Expand the Rate of Change Bylaw** to include the preservation of all purpose-built rentals in all zones. Avoid new development on sites where there are existing purpose-built rentals.
- 2) **Close loopholes in the Residential Tenancy Act** which permit predatory evictions.
- 3) **Preserve existing secondary suites** in older homes, about 700 of which are replaced each year. Regulations are needed to encourage the preservation of this housing stock, and make its expansion by renovation and infill more economically attractive than demolition and replacement with less affordable new homes and suites. We are very concerned that the regulations currently being developed for basements in larger new single family houses and laneway infill would have the reverse effect, resulting in a net loss of Vancouver's most affordable rental housing.

B) **Build additional rental stock**. Consider the following:

- 1) **Provide incentives for non-strata rentals with retention of existing houses** in single family zones. Allow (where appropriate and supported) laneway housing, additional FSR and additional secondary suites as an incentive to retain existing houses. Do not allow these incentives with new construction as this would encourage demolition of the more affordable older stock. [See A-3 above.]
- 2) **Purpose-built rentals should be for the life of the building**. Condos that are temporarily rented out (e.g. for 10 years) are not a viable solution to increasing rental stock and would produce tenure "time-bombs."
- 3) **Market rentals should not be dependant on density bonusing**. Overuse of bonusing drives up land costs, resulting in diminishing returns. Density should be determined through neighbourhood planning.
- 4) **Incentives for rental housing should not reduce amenities or DCLs**. Increasing density without providing adequate amenities will not create sustainable communities. Rentals should be treated as a required use—not an amenity.
- 5) **Implement inclusionary zoning** that requires a percentage of non-strata rentals as part of every new development in all multifamily zones across the city. This is in addition to secondary suites for apartments, and would be purpose-built for the life of the building. It was a serious mistake to permit strata-only development in Vancouver. The minimum amount of required purpose built rental in addition to secondary suites could be increased over time on a sliding scale (such as 10 – 20% to start).
- 6) **Locate density near rapid transit stations only after these have been built or under construction**, not where rapid transit is speculated to be built, as plans may change or be indefinitely postponed. High-density nodes not serviced by rapid transit could result in congestion at key intersections, impeding surface transit. TransLink's plans to use development and rezoning to fund transit projects may conflict with locating rentals there as well.
- 7) **Resume development of affordable rental and co-op housing on publicly owned land** (e.g. Little Mountain Housing). To insure additional affordable and speculation-proof housing in the near and longer terms, it is imperative that public land suitable for housing not be sold off for market projects, but developed as mixed rent-geared-to-income housing by governments or non-profits. At present, market rents in new buildings are problematic for families with median incomes and completely out of reach to low-income residents. Significant affordability in new development can only be achieved through use of public land or subsidies.
- 8) **Provide active and genuine involvement of CityPlan committees** and other neighbourhood groups as an essential part of addressing housing issues constructively and sustainably. For example, neighbourhood centre planning currently being pursued for Norquay Village seems likely to decrease the area's 32% low income family component by accelerating replacement of existing housing stock.