

Park residents to get new home

New development will replace mobile-home park in Ladysmith

BY KATIE DEROSA, TIMES COLONIST APRIL 23, 2009



A trailer at Ivy Green Marina mobile-home park.

Photograph by: Debra Brash, Times Colonist

Residents of a Ladysmith trailer park facing eviction are welcoming plans for a new development that will give them a place to live once moving day comes.

The Town of Ladysmith has partnered with a private developer to build a new mobile-home park, said Mayor Rob Hutchins, selling a chunk of public land to the developer at a price yet to be determined. The land will be zoned strictly for mobile-home parks, so residents being kicked out of Ivy Green Marina mobile home park in January won't have to worry about being displaced again.

The partner, Seven Links Marketing Development Ltd., already owns a trailer park in Ladysmith, Hutchins said.

After owner Oak Bay Marine Group announced the Ivy Green park would be shut down to make room for a waterfront residential development, an association of residents approached the Town of Ladysmith to propose creating new pad spaces, said resident Lynne Courtney.

"We decided, you can't fight city hall and you can't fight developers when the law is on their side," she said.

There are two components to the development, said Hutchins. Thirty-eight rental pads will be created on the former public land to replace those being eliminated at Ivy Green.

Hutchins said the plan is in its preliminary stages and the new rental rate has not yet been determined, although it will be more than the \$190 a month residents pay at Ivy Green.

"The land at Ivy Green is below market rate," Hutchins said. "It will depend on the cost of the development." Council has yet to decide whether they will negotiate a cap on pad rents, he said.

Another piece of private land nearby could be used for additional housing units, like mobile homes, wood-frame homes or a strata unit.

The town will discuss incentives for the developer to make the homes affordable, said Hutchins.

The two plots of land, which are close by each other, but not side by side, total about four hectares, he said, with space for at least 63 housing units.

Courtney said residents are glad this latest trailer-park eviction might have the makings of a happy ending. Such evictions are becoming increasingly common as developers eye the land for more lucrative developments, putting one of the most-affordable forms of family housing at risk.

The eviction of residents from a Metchosin trailer park near Pedder Bay this year resulted in a bitter court battle that left homeowners with a hefty bill, when they were forced to pay the legal fees of Oak Bay Marine Group after the judge found the group acted lawfully.

"We're trying to approach this from a far more positive perspective and we're trying to make this a good move for everybody," Courtney said.

In a letter to residents that accompanied the Jan. 23 eviction notice, Oak Bay Marine Group said it was working with a developer to build a trailer park where residents could relocate. But there were restrictions on older homes and there would not be enough space to accommodate all 38 trailers, Courtney said, which is why the new development is so important.

The moving costs will be substantial, between \$8,000 and \$12,000 per unit, she said.

The Oak Bay Marine Group planned to give the developer about \$55,000 to offset those costs, Lanny Sawchuk, the group's executive vice-president and chief operations officer, has said.

Hutchins said it is uncertain whether that money is available for the town's plan. Sawchuk could not be reached for comment.

The residents are guaranteed 12 months' rent -- about \$2,280 -- that can be used towards moving the homes.

The town will ask Oak Bay Marine Group to consider extending the move-out date in late January by a few months until the new trailer park is up and running.

The town will unveil plans for the new trailer park at a public meeting hosted by the residents' association tonight.

kderosa@tc.canwest.com

© Copyright (c) The Victoria Times Colonist