

Good housing attracts top academics

In the mid-campus area, where Hawthorn Green is located, up to 709 new residential units will be built by 2021, housing approximately 1,500 new residents. Of these units 213 will be rental housing; 496 will be market housing and 213 will be ground-oriented family housing.

"All of the proceeds from developments go into the university's endowment fund, which provides bursaries, scholarships and research funds," said Linda Moore, associate director of external affairs for University town.

What's unique about Hawthorn Green is it is the first residential "co-development" project which was built specifically to meet the needs of UBC faculty, staff and students.

Besides the 10 townhouses at Hawthorn Green, which each sold for about \$600,000, another 61 townhouse development is under way nearby. It is called Logan Lane, and once again is being built strictly for staff, faculty and students. Logan Lane is expected to be ready for occupancy by June, 2005.

"I would expect whatever remaining units at Logan Lane will go quickly and within no time we will be embarking on a third co-development project," said Moore.

Moore said the university is trying to get the message out to staff, faculty and students that they are willing to work with them to create sustainable housing specifically to meet their needs on campus.

In the \$6-million Hawthorn development it was staff and faculty who could afford to buy into the project, but a few students benefited because the owners are encouraged, although they are not obliged, to rent their "mortgage helpers" to students. (The average cost for the land, which is on a pre-paid, 99-year lease, was \$210,800. The average cost to design and construct the units was \$393,000).

It benefits us from a sustainability concept because it gets people out of their cars," said Moore.

She added it is believed this is the first co-development project in North America, and definitely the first within the confines of a major university.

The concept involves a group of people associated with the university, applying to lease land, at market rate, from UBC to create new townhouses or apartment condominium complexes.

Moore said because the group is not paying any overhead on marketing they save anywhere from 15 to 20 per cent

of what they would normally be paying for housing in the area.

On behalf of the co-developers, UBC Properties Trust acts as the project manager and does everything from arranging for the purchases of the leased land, to hiring the construction crew to providing guarantees to the bank.

Moore explained while co-development projects are specifically for staff, faculty and students University Town also includes market and rental housing.

Such properties already exist, such as the development of Chancellor House and the construction happening now to create Argyll House near the historic Iona building.

It's a common sight these days to see bulldozers and construction crews on campus.

The idea of creating a "University town" was first proposed at UBC in the 1914 community plan, but it wasn't until the early 1990s when the university began in earnest to try and make the vision a reality.

Moore said good housing is also necessary to attract top academics to come and teach at the university.

"One of the things about being a great university is we need to be able to recruit the best faculty and staff," she said.

"A professional coming from a less expensive city comes to Vancouver and very much wants to join UBC's faculty, but in the past we've lost some of those people because of the cost of housing."

Moore said the co-development projects and on-site rental property are a "good tool" to recruit people now, adding it was only five years ago that no rental housing existed at all on campus.

She said the cost to rent on campus is about \$1.45 per square foot while the typical market rent off campus would be in the \$2 per square foot range.