



BCAPI/VCSJ Housing Working Group Report

Dec 01 08



RE: TANNERY COURT PROJECT - 50 self-contained affordable apartments for low income non-elderly singles, to be located at Queen and Carmarthen. Developer is AVIDE, an arm of Co-op Atlantic.

- Housing Working Group members have held discussions with reps from Tannery Court, the City, the Province, Mental Health Services, the neighbourhood, non-profit and housing developers and low income non-elderly singles.
- Findings/Recommendations are highlighted below.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS:

The Owner/Developer is new to Saint John but has a solid reputation in social housing development and management.

The Project meets Municipal and Provincial Government regulations. The design of the building and individual units, the proposed amenities, and the project's viability are not in question.

There is a huge need in SJ for adequate and affordable housing for non-elderly singles. Rooming house conditions in SJ are generally poor; rents are increasing; building renovations and tenant displacements are on the rise.

Low income singles prefer to live in the city centre because their support services (government and non-profit) are primarily located in the uptown, within walking distance. Public transportation costs are prohibitive.

Although this type of housing has been successfully demonstrated in Fredericton and Moncton, this model does not align with Canadian "best practices" in the provision of permanent housing for the "hardest to house", including those with mental illness, substance abuse disorder, complex health needs. The size of the project (50 units) may be better suited to a transitional housing project that has adequate supports OR a stronger mixture of household types.

The location of the Project is not recommended, due to the high concentration of poverty (47%) in the immediate neighbourhood. The developer (and their municipal/provincial advisors) did not appear to take into consideration the priorities of the neighbourhood nor consult with the community leaders who are working to stabilize and improve the neighbourhood. Mixed income projects and family housing are priorities for this neighbourhood. Other housing developers have been working to achieve this.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS:

A. FOR THE DEVELOPER/OWNER:

Although less than ideal, this project meets current government regulations and responds to a serious housing need. A number of smaller scale housing projects for low income non-elderly tenants scattered throughout various neighbourhoods OR a better mix of incomes and household types at this site, would be preferred.

If the developer decides to proceed, we recommend that the developer/owner:

- **Maximize the tenant mix (within the \$22,000 guideline for non-elderly singles).** Many low-income singles are able to live independently when provided housing that relieves income stress and offers safe/quality living.
- **Connect with local service providers (mental health, addictions, salvation army, etc) to help tenants receive best available health, social, and financial supports.**

- Actively connect with neighbourhood and community leaders to learn about the Saint John's poverty reduction and neighbourhood strategies; to strengthen relationships and communication pathways; to achieve the best possible housing project.

B. FOR THE MUNICIPALITY /Community :

To Help Future Affordable Housing Development:

- **Develop an affordable housing strategy for Saint John that:**
 - describes a preferred consultation process for developers and neighbourhoods
 - describes the affordable housing needs and challenges in SJ and the most relevant "best practices" to address current priorities
 - recommends immediate leadership, incentives, guidelines and specific projects for affordable housing development in Saint John
 - plans for the growth of mixed income housing development that serve a full range of needs and household types
 - plans for mixed income neighbourhoods and basic amenities
 - integrates the affordable housing strategy into broader housing and neighbourhood strategies for Saint John
- **Develop neighbourhood plans for the South End, Waterloo Village, and Old North End**

C. FOR THE PROVINCE:

- **Provide funding to enable the City of Saint John to lead the development of an affordable housing strategy for Saint John.**
- **Re-evaluate "most in need" and other housing policies to encourage "neighbourhood mix", and to allow greater eligibility for low income households who are moving towards self-sufficiency.**
- **Appeal to the Government of Canada to participate in affordable housing solutions and comprehensive improvements to priority neighbourhoods in Saint John.**

D. FOR BICAPI and VCSJ LEADERS

- **Support and help to communicate the recommendations of the Housing Working Group**