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Protect B.C. trailer parks, tenants say

BY DARRELL BELLAART, THE DAILY NEWS MARCH 14, 2009

Ivy Green mobile home park residents facing eviction in 10 months will ask Ladysmith town council for a policy to protect others from a similar fate.

They want town council to create zoning that would make landowners responsible for some of the cost to tenants living in mobile homes when the property is rezoned for a different use.

In late January the residents of 38 units in the seaside park received 12-month eviction notices from Oak Bay Marine Group, which plans to build a 140-unit housing development.

That leaves the residents, most of whom are seniors who have lived there for years, with few options. Mobile homes can be costly and difficult to move, especially if they've been modified or have additions built on. Not many parks have spaces and even fewer allow older units.

In recent years, developers have favoured the heftier profits a housing development generate over rents from a mobile home park, meaning few new parks are being built. Still, Ivy Green residents want town council to write a bylaw requiring landlords to keep mobile home parks for manufactured homes.

"We want restrictions on zoning that would allow only mobile homes, not single family," said Lynne Courtney, spokesperson for Ivy Green residents.

The Manufactured Home Park Tenancy Act previously required that tenants to be compensated up to $10,000 of the cost of moving their manufactured homes when evicted. The provincial government changed that to 12 month's rent compensation. Pad rentals usually range between $200 and $400 a month, so the compensation amount is considerably less.

The issue isn't unique to Ladysmith. Similar evictions have caused social upheaval at trailer parks in Sooke and Langford. When a park was closed at Petter Bay recently, some residents burned down their homes because they couldn't find a new park to move them to.

Sooke and Langford have since adopted policies that require mobile home park owners to better compensate renters if the land is redeveloped.

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