



Thursday » January
11 » 2007

Housing plan flawed

The Edmonton Journal

Sunday, January 07, 2007

Re: "Edmonton envy," Second Opinion, Jan. 4.

This editorial from the Calgary Herald praises Mayor Stephen Mandel's initiative to build about 1,000 units for first time homebuyers on unused school lands.

Most of the people arguing about using school sites for housing are missing the point.

Public space is being privatized. Providing homes for first-time buyers is only an excuse. Supposedly, the land and units will be sold at market rates. If there is no subsidy, there is no reason to use school sites. Land can be acquired at market rates anywhere. And the city can provide second mortgages on any property.

Currently, there are 200 units, including 30 with three or more bedrooms, available for less than \$200,000 each in Edmonton.

If city council wants to help first-time homebuyers, they can do so in a multitude of ways, without giving public green space to private individuals.

Some see green space as waste, especially green space held by school boards. In particular, developers see school sites as perfect for residential and commercial infill.

While the proposal is to develop a small portion of each site, the conversion of public space school sites to private use sets a precedent. All of our green space is at risk.

The tragedy of the river valley is perfect example. Council reversed a policy land acquisition in the river valley in the mid-1990s and now we have major residential developments on a flood plain. Public space has been reduced to a walking path.

Green space is needed throughout the city. It has been provided by school sites covered by joint-use agreements, available to all. School sites make Edmonton livable. They provide playing fields and grassy knolls -- civic assets to be enjoyed by all -- not undeveloped land.

Larry Phillips, Edmonton

© The Edmonton Journal 2007

CLOSE WINDOW

Copyright © 2007 CanWest Interactive, a division of CanWest MediaWorks Publications, Inc. All rights reserved.