

SPOTLIGHT Controversial \$3.4 million loan to condo builder exposes fissure in seaside community

White Rock backs developer, eyes the future

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WESTERN INVESTOR

The recent municipal election in White Rock revealed citizen concerns for the future of the pretty seaside town that boasts one of the greatest beaches and most sunshine in Metro Vancouver.

White Rock is bordered on the south by the United States and the shores of Semiahmoo Bay on the north, and to the east and west by the **District of Surrey**.

A magnificent sandy beach dominated by a large white rock – the basis of a romantic legend and regularly repainted – and a 1,500-foot-long pier are the most widely known landmarks of the city.

Yet White Rock is also the site of a controversial condominium and retail project that has pitted old-timers afraid the town is changing too fast against those who see big-time development as the future.

At the centre of the debate is the highrise Miramer Village complex by **Bosa Properties**. The **City of White Rock** recently voted to provide a \$3.4 million second mortgage to Bosa



Miramer Village, White Rock: City provided \$3.4 million second mortgage.

to finish the first phase of the Village. Details of the mortgage were not being released as of press time and may not be known until after the November civic elections.

Bosa purchased land for what was then known as the Town Centre project from the City of White Rock for \$7.6 million in 2004 following a request for proposals from the city.

The second phase of the Village, which consists of two new towers, is on hold, however. The developer claims the entire project will eventually proceed.

A spokesman for Bosa said that 90 per cent of the 225 homes in the first phase have

White Rock, BC

Population 18,775

Average house price \$904,643

Average condo price \$288,906

Median family income \$62,000

Potential Residential & retail investments

sold, and owners could be moving in before Christmas of this year.

However, candidates running for mayor of White Rock faced tough questions on the mortgage issue during a packed meeting last month hosted by the **White Rock and South Surrey Chamber of Commerce**.

Judging from the tone of questions some residents are afraid the city is being put at risk by backing the Bosa mortgage; others say development is simply getting out of hand.

City manager **Peggy Clark** told the *Peace Arch News* that Bosa defaulting on the second mortgage “is not a question. ... Bosa will not default because the project has been built, so it’s a non-issue. I think some of the concerns in the community are [people] are seeing other projects that are not constructed defaulting.

This one is [constructed].”

The developer has also moved to derail fears that the landmark project may end badly.

“While we have elected to delay the construction and marketing of our next phase in light of the current financial environment, we are hopeful that these factors will resolve themselves shortly and allow us to commence construction and marketing on our second phase as soon as possible,” according to a Bosa statement.

Phase 2 was originally slated to begin as soon as Phase 1 was completed.

Meanwhile, White Rock continues to have the highest housing prices in the Fraser Valley and the third highest in all of Metro Vancouver, behind only West Vancouver and the West Side of Vancouver.

The average price of a detached house, as of October, was \$904,643, up 4.2 per cent from a year earlier, and one of the few Lower Mainland municipalities to report a year-over-year price increase. House prices were up 11 per cent from September.

The typical condominium apartment in White Rock sells for \$288,906, according to the **Fraser Valley Real Estate Board**, with prices up nearly 10 per cent from 2007. ♦