

News

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FULL TEXT

Karen Sawatzky, chair of the Renters Advisory Committee, is equally concerned, especially as she's a life-long renter. "Helping to get candidates educated about the process, the different challenges and the costs involved in rental housing, is really important. Hopefully, the event will help forward the dialogue and discussion about rental housing, how to address that vacancy rate and how to improve the housing situation for renters so that they have more choices about who to rent from," she said.

"Right now, renters have so few options. That really means they have very little power. The vacancy rate means that landlords have all the power. We need to have more rental housing built, especially secure, long-term rental housing because a lot of our rental housing here, in the City of Vancouver and regionally, is in insecure forms such as secondary suites and condominiums."

Sawatzky hopes the workshop attracts election candidates with a wide variety of political opinions and approaches to housing. Even if they think the rules should be different, she said it's important for them to understand existing rules and processes.

The workshop is especially important for first-time candidates, she added, because if they are elected, they will have housing applications to vote on right away. The information provided at the event will help them make more informed decisions, help them understand how policy decisions affect what projects even get proposed, and help inform their platforms prior to the Oct. 20 election.

"It's quite a complex topic. Developing rental housing is not a straight forward, easy thing. There's a lot of different moving parts - there's financing, all the different things you can do on the land, and all the rules that govern that...," she said.

"A three-hour workshop is not going to make anyone an expert in this but, hopefully, it will increase people's knowledge so they can speak knowledgably, ask better questions and maybe come up with more informed ideas about how to improve the situation."

@naoibh

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