

Smallworks Studios: Small is beautiful

By Goody Niosi Writer

VANCOUVER - Small is beautiful.

It's also practical and it's helping young families in the Lower Mainland get into the housing market for the first time.

Smallworks Studios & Laneway Housing Inc. is in the forefront of those who are advocating for small houses in Vancouver and the Fraser Valley. Company owner Jake Fry, in a peer review, was recently named one of the top 20 influential people in construction in Vancouver for 2010.

Smallworks has been constructing small, beautiful and sustainable houses for over five years. The company works with established licensed architects who have been in practice for over 20 years; its green building practices exceed the standards for Vancouver's Green Home Program.

Company owner Jake Fry says, "We're revitalizing an older form of housing that we call laneway housing. In the broadest sense, you can keep single family neighbourhoods but also address the need for more housing stock by taking down garages and putting in small residences under 1,000 square feet."

The small homes echo the carriage houses of 80 or 90 years ago and, in a sense, serve a similar purpose - additional housing where space is at a premium. Laneway houses also help preserve existing housing stock and keep the landfill free of demolition waste.

Fry, a carpenter by trade, says that often a young couple has enough money to build a house but can't afford to buy the land. Instead, what they can do is build on a parent's land by tearing down the garage and replacing it with a laneway home.

As circumstances change and the couple has a growing



Jake Fry

family, the parents may switch dwellings, with the family living in the larger home and the older couple taking over the laneway house.

Not only are the homes that Smallworks builds a practical housing solution, they're also beautiful.

"Where we really differ from others who build laneway houses, is that we tend to specialize in a more elaborate home," Fry says. "Our homes tend to be finely finished and durable and have a more traditional look. Our homes are all about people accommodating their families."

The idea of laneway houses

was born when Fry was living in Toronto in an apartment overlooking a carriage house. "What an ideal living situation!" Fry thought. When he moved to Vancouver with his family, he realized that the Lower Mainland was the perfect place to build small homes.

He began advocating for laneway homes and credits the current mayor and council for their visionary backing of the concept.

Smallworks is a growing concern. Currently the company has up to two housing starts per month although Fry says he can see that growing rapidly to three starts.

"Our primary focus is Vancouver," he says. "But part of our expansion is being able to offer people our houses as kits. Then, in short order, we'll be able to ship anywhere in containers."

He adds that he and his team are hungry for growth.

"We feel the type of growth we want to do is very sustainable. We have a niche market and that niche market is growing."

Smallworks Studios & Laneway Housing is at 7520 Balaclava Street in Vancouver.

www.smallworks.ca



A Smallworks project

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SANDY BLUE



Commission adds new member

The Maple Ridge Economic Advisory Commission (EAC) welcomes Mary Jane Stenberg to the 12 member advisory commission to Council.

The other commissioners are Mayor Ernie Daykin, Councilors Judy Dueck and Al Hogarth, Chair Glenn Ralph, Vice-chair Chris Rounding, Arts Council Representative Bonnie Telep, Chamber of Commerce Representative Jeff Knutson, BIA Representative Michael Serry, and members at large Stan Duckworth, Malvin Harding and Maria Gallo.

The goal of the EAC is to help achieve the vision of Council to grow and diversify the local economy.

www.investmapleridge.ca

E-Comm Board Appointment Mayor Ernie Daykin is now the appointed representative for Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows on the E-Comm Board of Directors. E-Comm provides emergency dispatch services for police and fire services in Maple Ridge and surrounding communities by monitoring and responding to all 911 calls.

Handy Farmers Market will be kicking off their 2011 season on May 7.

The Farmers Market plays a key role in marketing local agriculture products and attracts 1,500 residents and visitors

each week that are interested in shopping local. In 2008 it was estimated by Farmers' Markets Canada that Canadian farmers markets generate direct annual sales of over one billion dollars and have a total economic impact of more than three billion dollars.

www.haneyfarmersmarket.org

Don Campbell, President of the Real Estate Investment Network (REIN) is bringing 300 potential investors from around Canada to Maple Ridge on May 13.

During their visit they will tour the community, looking at the investment opportunities that made Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows the 2010 REIN pick as the #2 Investment City in BC and #5 in Canada.

The District will host a lunch for the potential investors, where there will be an opportunity for local business people to put up displays and become event sponsors as we showcase the diversity of opportunities in our community.

If you'd like to participate in this event, contact Sandy Blue, Manager Strategic Economic Initiatives at 604-467-7319.

- Sandy Blue is the Manager Strategic Economic Initiatives at the District of Maple Ridge. She can be reached at sblue@mapleridge.ca



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