

# **GWAC Public Meeting**

## **August 12, 2013**

### **Notes:**

Jak King explained the purpose of the meeting and introduced a panel of speakers from the Downtown Eastside, Marpole, Mt Pleasant and the West End. The following is a summary of comments made by panellists and speakers from the audience:

DTES: Karen Ward expressed the concerns of her neighbourhood:

- Gentrification is causing displacement of many living currently in SROs(single room occupancy hotels) and Emerging Directions does not contain any strategies for dealing with this.
- There is no dignity afforded those who live in the existing 4100 SRO units
- Emergency shelters provide 80 units per year which is not enough to keep up with DTES population growth
- The proposed plan is a betrayal of the TOR which promised improvements in the quality of life of DTES residents, especially the most vulnerable
- They call on the City to create a definition of social housing
- They are frustrated by the LAP process and feel they are being dictated to
- Developers voices have replaced community voices
- All neighbourhoods need to come together and find common goals: people first, not profits

DTES: Rob Morgan:

- DTES plan working group has 30 seats,15 for low income residents which have been taken by activists
- The City keeps them occupied with paperwork
- TOR stated that the City must recognize the effects of colonization on low income Aboriginal residents
- BC Housing cut 200 beds at First United and 15 people have died in the last 8 months
- The DTES has a lot of services for Aboriginal youth who are seeking treatment. Rob wants the youth out of the DTES, alive, not dead
- Women's safety in the DTES needs to be addressed, including poverty, insecurity and violence against women
- Some members of the LAP working group have walked away in frustration
- They want an extension but the City told them there was no funding available to extend the process

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WEST END: John Weldon:

- Concerned with the hostile nature of the process
- Their community liaison group started in 2011 when staff referred to general TOR for Marpole, Grandview-Woodland and the West End.
- City staff told them there would be a discussion of the role of a community liaison group
- No discussion happened and they were told that the role was assisting staff with public meetings
- In the staff report to Council there was no process advisory role for Marpole and the WE, although G-W was given a bit of a role
- Asks whether Council has an agenda that is in conflict with citizens' concerns or simply a desire for control
- In 2008-9 there was development pressure building in the WE.
- WE Neighbours group got 13,000 signatures asking that no development take place until the plan was in place
- Instead, the developer of 1401 Comox got 5x density for market rental, but there were no developer fees or community amenity contributions
- In October 2012 there were Open Houses, but the Core Values were imposed by the city, residents felt they 'came out of nowhere'
- 9,000 people currently live in the WE
- Emerging Directions and planning directions envision 20 stories at Davie and Robson and up to 70 stories elsewhere in the WE. Additional height is being offered to get rental suites built
- Residents are concerned with building scale and height, not just housing affordability
- The Urban Design Panel is concerned with the ability of the proposed plan to meet development pressures.
- On Aug 28 the Director and Asst Director of Planning will attend a WE Neighbours meeting.
- They are hoping for an extension

MARPOLE: Mike Burdick, Wendy Cosby and Albert Leong

Mike:

- They are attending as representatives of a coalition opposing the forced rezoning of Marpole which is a group that is 'new to this process'

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- 6 weeks ago they found out that the City planned a 50% densification of their community with no consultation. They fought the Thin Street proposal very successfully but believe it was a 'throw away'
- Wendy's husband designed a flyer which explained to neighbours what was going on.
- 50 residents came out to their meeting, only 1 person had heard of the City's consultation on the Plan
- They are now mobilizing online:liveablevancouver.com is their website and [savemarpole@gmail.com](mailto:savemarpole@gmail.com) is their email
- There's a diversity of opinion in Marpole, some want more consultation, some want it to stop.

Albert:

- 99% of residents are not aware of the plan
- Want to educate the neighbourhood
- Made a database of 4,000 addresses in Marpole
- Started recruiting volunteers
- This weekend are having a kickoff event, expecting 1,000 people
- Have made lawn signs with donated funds
- Will have petition to take to City Hall

MT PLEASANT: Stephen Bohus

- They had the first of the new community plans which is now in implementation phase.
- Stephen presented a Powerpoint of their issues.

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS FROM THE FLOOR:

- Dorothy Barkley, GWAC, asked what is on the Marpole lawn signs ( Stop Marpole Rezoning)  
Suggests all groups consider who is driving the process, Council, or planners in the pockets of developers
- John Weldon, West End response: Go right to the top. Council is ultimately responsible for the plans, bureaucrats do what they are told
- Grace MacKenzie, representing RAMP, Residents Association of Mt Pleasant: Involved with Mt Pleasant plan since 2007. Planners lied to us, intentionally provided incorrect information
- Jak King has heard from City Hall sources that this is the most politicized staff ever

- John Weldon, West End: Council will deflect in anticipation of the next election. The planning process is broken, there's no document management. Plans are influenced by requirements of Metro Vancouver. Suggests that we force them to define roles and responsibilities
- Nicholas Chernen, from OAKRIDGE: Is here to learn what's happening. Sees that each neighbourhood has unique issues, but what is the same is how we are all being treated by City Hall. He and others are starting the Vancouver Cedar Party ([cedarparty.ca](http://cedarparty.ca)) to work for change. Tonight's meeting is what is going to create change and make it difficult for the City to continue with divide and conquer in our communities
- Rob Morgan, DTES: Concerned about upzoning. Believes Vision Vancouver and City Hall are in an alliance with developers and their agenda doesn't meet the needs of neighbourhoods  
He sees a great difference between plans: they have more control of their process. At each open house they have a suggestion box and pick out the suggestions they all agree on. From day 1 they asked for a definition of social housing, have not got it in 13 months. Wants to know why when they put in their ideas and input, Planners filter it out.
- Jesse Johl, Hillcrest Community Centre president: Spearheading fight between community centres and Park Board over lack of consultation. Actions there and with plan are driven by desires of staff and upper management. Penny Ballem came to a meeting, gave a power point of her plan, then held round table discussions Result: City Hall came forward with their original idea and said take it or leave it.  
Planners used to go to community meetings and act as advocates for te community. Now they meet with community and then go back and do the bidding of their masters.
- Joseph Jones, Norquay: Referred to Norquay planning process as a horror story. In 2007 there was a \$70k neighbourhood survey which produced opposition to the City's plan. 'consultation stopped dead and City hired a consultant who advised them to toss out the survey results. In 2008 they hoped to get rid of the NPA and 'ecodensity'. Met with 2 Vision Councillors who held out hope but, once elected, lied and 'screwed them in the end.'
- He told the audience to keep fighting. Stated that we the people run the city, not the politicians and bureaucrats

- Gracie, Mt Pleasant: Their plan said there would be no rezoning but now there are 2 rezonings, at 2<sup>nd</sup> and Main and 7<sup>th</sup> and Main. Now the Planner says “Zoning is different from what was anticipated in the Plan.” Matt Shillito has decided he can change the plan and force Mt Pleasant to agree. Warns that they will change the goal posts even after the plan is complete.  
Expresses interest in new NSV Party.
- Terry Stafford, resident 1800 block East 8<sup>th</sup>:  
He does not have solutions and does not see a clear path forward. Feels that most attending this meeting and in the neighbourhood would rather be fucked by Vision than vote NPA. He attended a meeting where only Cllr Elizabeth Ball attended, so he will vote for her. Advises others to vote for individuals who have an interest in our neighbourhoods.  
He sees an ideologically driven bunch of zealots in City Hall who want the greenest city but don't care about the people who live here, individuals don't matter to them.
- Ifney Lachance, resident Georgia and Commercial:  
Started Free Geek and is a biking community organizer. Is not interested in partisan politics. Does not think this plan is ideologically driven, it's money driven. Believes their strategy is containment, neutralization and exhaustion by consultation that means nothing. This Council have changed the definition of affordable housing. Instead of 30% of income, affordable housing is housing that anyone can afford. We need rental housing, not more condos. We can't afford another Vision Council in 2014
- Pete Fry, Strathcona Residents Association:  
Agrees that the City is just wearing us down. Sat on LAPP for DTES and concluded that community consultation is a sham. Emerging Directions were `all news to them` with heights and density they had never discussed.
- Colin Stark, local resident:  
Worked from 1995-2005 with Canadians for Direct Democracy. The HST referendum was the only example of direct democracy that worked. Wants a new decision making process. Now decisions are made in `smoky back rooms`.
- Gerry McKee Patriquin, Kitsilano resident:  
Kits residents` recent experience with City Hall, submitting poll and questionnaire results to Council were negative. Council`s experts said their polls were wrong and they were ignored. Kits has the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest group of seniors in the City. They haven't

been given info on proposed towers on Broadway and at 4<sup>th</sup> and MacDonald. City planners are keeping their jobs by approving plans developers want. Residents affected are not informed and are unaware of issues on the table. Suggest we make sure planners assigned know your neighbourhood.

- Jak concluded this segment of the meeting, stating that it was a good discussion and the first of a series of meetings. Appreciated participants from other areas: `We can do a lot better together than we can alone`. He cited residents` outrage and stated that the planning process must be rethought. In the last 10 weeks we have found that we *can* fight City Hall. Council thought that we would get bored with this issue over the summer but we will put this time to good use. We need to reanimate the process and decide whether we want surveys...need to get answers so we can tell Brian Jackson what we want.
- Louis Villegas, RAMP: Mt Pleasant created an alternative process, had a charette. Using 4 story buildings, Mt Pleasant could house 26,000 more people without the need for towers. They presented their own vision for densification. He believes planning should go. Neighbourhoods should say what they want and be given good planning tools to do this. He believes 6 story wooden buildings and row houses should be made legal. Supports the idea of getting neighbourhoods together.
- Garth Mullins, local resident:  
Wants to develop an alternative process that begins on September 25<sup>th</sup> and ends before the next election. Council makes decisions and they are listening to us. We need to raise the political costs of doing the wrong thing. By raising the spectre of greenwashing and mega projects and condo towers we can damage the brand Vancouver has on the world stage. We need coalition building among the 4 or 5 groups here tonight.
- Blair Redland, resident at Semlin and Georgia:  
This was an inspiring meeting, whatever GWAC can do to unify neighbourhoods is positive. GWAC should replicate demands from other neighbourhoods, should find out how many more people G-W is expected to add and insist on a definition of social housing. Take an idea from the CityPlan process and create an information package. We also need the City to get information out to ESL groups and residents. We have sub area plans, need to do sub area processes. Mt Pleasant has given us a model of a community doing its own thing.
- Anita Colson, local resident:

Need to develop an alternative process, not just a reaction. Density plans do not include having more parks, daycares, playgrounds and schools. We need to say what we want and need.

- Tamara Herman, new G-W resident:  
Worked on the DTES LAP. Warns that consultation can be a form of legitimization. We must bring in First nations, people of colour. The City claims they don't have the funding to do this. We need to have the 4 neighbourhoods work together.  
Is concerned with promises Jak got from Brian Jackson since they are not in writing.
- Jak replies that Jackson's comments were taped. Asks for ideas for GWAC's demand letter to Jackson which we will be sending by the end of August.
- Dorothy Barkley ,GWAC: requests that other groups share invitation to their neighbourhood meetings and circulate minutes to all of us.
- David Parent, GWAC: References the success GWAC has had working with the SRA.
- Tracey Moir, Oakridge-Langara Area Residents group:  
Asks for a synopsis of G-W issues to be shared among all neighbourhood groups present.
- Ifney Lachance from Free Geek: Has made a recording which she offers to all attending groups. She invites those present to the upcoming COPE AGM. Would like list of names of people in all groups who are willing to circulate flyers and petitions. Need to bring in other ethnic groups.

Jak concluded the meeting by thanking those attending and urging them to sign up to speak at the September 25<sup>th</sup> Council meeting. Being there, whether speaking or not, is recognized and puts pressure on Council.