

Neighbourhoods for a Sustainable Vancouver

September 29, 2008

Mayor Sullivan and City Councillors
City of Vancouver
453 West 12 Avenue
Vancouver, B.C. V5Y 1V4

Dear Mayor and Councillors:

Re: Laneway Housing (LWH)

Neighbourhoods for a Sustainable Vancouver is a city wide ad hoc organization of neighbourhood groups that includes residents' associations, CityPlan Vision implementation committees, ratepayers' associations and community groups. Further to our previous letters on EcoDensity, please accept this letter as our comments on the laneway housing (LWH) consultation process.

First, we would like to point out that EcoDensity policy is not required in order to approve laneway housing. Just like secondary basement suites that were phased in and eventually approved outright once the building code issues and unintended consequences were fully addressed, laneway housing could be approved without EcoDensity. Considering EcoDensity was passed by Council with only 23% of letters for support and 77% of non-support or requesting changes, it does not represent a mandate for laneway housing. It should be considered on its own merits that requires an inclusive and transparent consultation process. So far, we are concerned that the first City request for information from the public in the form of a questionnaire was only directed to those who want to build or live in laneway housing. This is presumptive and is not inclusive. There are many issues that need to be worked out on this, and all the stakeholders need to be included in consultations on the pilot projects, assessing the completed projects, determining what, if any, should be applied more broadly once the unintended consequences are addressed, where they should be located, and any changes to the existing zoning schedules, bylaws and rezoning.

In addition to our letter dated May 28, 2008 on EcoDensity – Action C-5: Issues and Options for Backyard Laneway Housing, we make the following comments on the laneway housing proposal:

- **Process:** Any implementation should go through the Community Vision Implementation process, be based on each neighbourhood's individual character, and only be implemented where there is substantial community support. Contrary to the City's statement at the CityPlan Pan-Vision meeting, laneway housing is a form of infill. Infill was generally addressed in the Community Visions, which should be respected. Pilot projects should be monitored for unintended consequences over time before expanding to other areas, as may be approved by local neighbourhoods. LWH should not be excluded from areas considered for rezoning.
- **Incentive to Retain Existing Character Houses:** Keep laneway housing as a non-strata rental or family suite that is conditional on retaining an existing character single-family house, and not allowed out-right with new construction of a main house, so as to protect heritage incentive programs and neighbourhood character. The definition of "existing character house" will have to be defined, and loopholes closed which could result in the existing house being demolished while leaving the LWH with a newly constructed house.
- **Code and Bylaw Review:** The LWH could be part of the existing Secondary Suite Program. As such, it would require a review of the building codes to determine what relaxations may be required for the existing main house and the LWH. (i.e. relaxations for fire sprinklers)

- **Size:** A LWH must be small in scale, within the same footprint, location and maximum size of the envelope of a garage as allowed under existing bylaws, including height and roof slope.
- **Parking:** On-site parking should include at least two parking spaces, with additional on-site parking on larger lots, since they may have larger LWH units. Any relaxations should be based on site specific considerations (i.e. lot street frontage), with the unanimous written support of the surrounding property owners.
- **Relaxations:** Any relaxations to envelope size or location (i.e. relaxations of height to add another half storey of an attic dormer in the pitched roof, or of side yards) should require unanimous written support from the surrounding property owners who may be affected.
- **Appeal and Dispute Resolution:** There needs to be an appeal and dispute resolution process for applicants and affected third parties for any relaxations to envelope size or location (such as height or side yards) and to relaxations to parking regulations.

Please consider our comments and we look forward to being actively included in the consultation processes.

Regards,
Neighbourhoods for a Sustainable Vancouver

Group contact email: agroupofvancouverneighbourhoods@hotmail.com

Supporting Group names:

- Advocates for Hastings Sunrise
- Arbutus Ridge Concerned Citizens Association
- Arbutus Ridge/Kerrisdale/Shaugnessy CityPlan Vision Implementation Committee
- Britannia Neighbours in Action
- Building Better Neighbourhoods
- Citywide Housing Coalition
- Douglas Park Residents Association
- Dunbar Residents' Association
- East Fraser Lands Committee – Sharon Saunders **
- Friends of Southlands Society
- Hastings Sunrise CityPlan Vision Implementation Committee
- Kensington Cedar Cottage CityPlan Vision Implementation Committee
- Kitsilano Arbutus Residents' Association
- Kitsilano Point Residents' Association
- Marpole Oakridge Area Council Society
- Norquay Neighbours – Joseph Jones **
- North West Point Grey Home Owners' Association
- Reinstate Third Party Appeals
- Riley Park / South Cambie CityPlan Vision Implementation Committee
- Shaughnessy Heights Property Owners Association
- South Hill Initiative for Neighbourhood Engagement (SHINE)
- Southwest Marine Drive Ratepayers' Association
- Upper Kitsilano Residents Association
- Victoria Park Group – Gail Mountain **
- West Kitsilano Residents Association
- West Point Grey CityPlan Vision Community Liaison Group

* Some members of the group indicate support for the letter, but have not voted on it yet due to timelines.

** Signed as an individual member

Cc: Brent Toderian, Director of Planning
Ronda Howard, Assistant Director of Planning – City-Wide and Regional Planning

Kent Munro, Assistant Director of Planning – Community Planning Division
Rob Jenkins, Assistant Director, Current Planning Initiatives Branch
Thor Kuhlmann, Planner, City-Wide Regional Planning
Cameron Gray, Director of Housing
Marco D’Agostini, Senior Heritage Planner
Judy Rogers, City Manager

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