



MEDIA RELEASE

NSV declares support for CCAP affordable housing, homelessness solutions

(Vancouver, Nov. 18, 2011) Randy Helten, mayoral candidate for **Neighbourhoods for a Sustainable Vancouver (NSV)** today declared support, in principle, for several solutions to Vancouver's housing and homelessness crisis proposed by civic activist Ivan Drury (DTES Neighbourhood Council) and the Carnegie Community Action Project (CCAP).

Drury proposes three solutions that the City of Vancouver should implement, which are also very close to the CCAP position:

1. Buy 10 sites a year in the DTES for 5 years and dedicate these sites for social housing to replace all 5,000 units of unsafe, unstable, unhealthy Single-Room Occupancy (SRO) hotel housing.
2. Close the loopholes in the SRA bylaw: Define "conversion" of SRO hotels as raising rents above welfare and pension-affordable rates of \$375/month.
3. Implement an immediate moratorium on market development in the DTES to allow the DTES Local Area Planning process, not developers and market forces, to direct the future of the neighbourhood.

Source: *The Mainlander* (Nov. 15, 2011) (<http://themainlander.com/2011/11/15/three-solutions-to-vancouver%E2%80%99s-housing-and-homelessness-crisis-2/>)

NSV comment: NSV supports these proposals, in principle, with the proviso that before the city commits to purchasing a specific number of properties it should first undertake an analysis of the costs and potential sources of revenue required to purchase and redevelop or renovate the properties. It is essential that the City have stronger policies in place to keep the market value of SRO hotels as low as possible to prevent speculation-driven inflation. Existing heritage and character buildings that are purchased by the city should be restored, upgraded, and rebuilt as social housing (not demolished) to retain the character of the heritage districts.

NSV notes additional proposals by CCAP, covered in a report entitled *Pushed Out*:

4. Define "low-income housing" to mean affordable by people with welfare level incomes.
5. Enforce maintenance standards in hotels.
6. Allocate funds now for low-income housing in the DTES.

Source: CCAP report *Pushed Out* (<http://ccapvancouver.files.wordpress.com/2010/09/ccaphotelreportweb.pdf>)

Comment: NSV supports these proposals, in principle.

On the topics of housing and homelessness, Helten also noted the following.

- All of Vancouver's current non-market housing initiatives were actually started last term under the NPA.-led Council. Mayor Robertson has not made any significant gains in building new social housing.
- In fact, in 2009 Mayor Robertson enabled the destruction of 220 serviceable family homes at the BC Housing Little Mountain complex by granting a demolition permit, even though redevelopment and replacement is years—possibly more than a decade—away. Vision continued with the NPA's plans at Little Mountain and the privatization schemes to sell off public land continues. About 700 people, many of them long-term residents, lost their homes, and the site has been vacant now for two years. There is also an estimated \$10m of lost rental revenue that would have been collected from the units if they had been left occupied. The cost of upgrading the units was estimated at \$2-3 million.
- The street homelessness count announced by the City was done just before the shelters closed for the summer in 2011. The number of street homeless is higher than in that count. The 4 low-barrier HEAT Shelters, capacity about 200 beds, have not been reopened.. Some of the street homeless have gravitated to the Occupy Vancouver tent city for lack of a better alternative.



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- The shelters are one step in the right direction, but they are not a long term solution to housing people
- Many of the policies for increasing development have increased speculation, land values and displacement of existing tenants that is increasing the problems of homelessness and rent inflation.
- Development pressures created by development policies increase inflation from speculative flipping and make housing less affordable. Both Vision and the NPA have created policies that make housing less affordable through increased inflation.

NSV is an elector organization based on a network of individuals in neighbourhoods all over Vancouver. For five years, the network has provided extensive policy analysis and input City Hall regarding critical Council decisions. It is running five candidates for City Council in the November 19 election, including Randy Helten as mayoral candidate, and Nicole Benson, Marie Kerchum, Terry Martin, and Elizabeth Murphy as councillor candidates.

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