

EcoDensity?

Ask Hard Questions – Don't Settle for Easy Answers

A generation ago, Vancouver citizens (including former mayor Mike Harcourt, when he was a young lawyer) stood up to defeat city plans to build a freeway along Vancouver's waterfront and to raze the Strathcona neighborhood for urban renewal tract housing. **The present livability of Vancouver is founded on citizen opposition to planning experts.** EcoDensity aims to return planning to this discredited centralized approach, and to dismantle the neighborhood level planning established in the wake of the planners' fiasco.

- Why does such a far-reaching proposal require extreme haste and little genuine citizen consultation?
- If growth and consumption fuel global warming, doesn't a deliberate acceleration of local redevelopment and expansion of population just compound the problem?
- Why should developers be density bonused for basic green measures that belong in city-wide building standards?
- What is ecological about a bias toward demolition of existing buildings (landfill waste coupled with new consumption of energy and natural resources)?
- Shouldn't Vancouver residents have a real say about what happens in their own neighborhoods?
- If Vancouver acts alone on EcoDensity, won't it be forcing present residents who want yards and green space to move out into the areas it claims to be preserving?
- Does it make sense to attempt to densify all of Vancouver at once rather than to extend a solid density from the existing urban core – a density that can support simultaneous provision of related services and infrastructure like new community centers and adequate transit?
- What is ecological or energy-efficient about skyscrapers designed for views as compared with human-scale buildings closer to ground level (four to six stories)?
- What is EcoDensity beyond a zoning gift that allows speedy development with minimal review?
- Before Vancouver attempts EcoDensity, shouldn't the City start by seriously addressing the greatest ecological challenge – current municipal automobile use?
- How does increased affordability result from market development when the costs of new construction offset the use of less land?
- What is affordable about altering fee simple land ownership to strata-title ownership that entails significant ongoing fees?
- Won't EcoDensity gentrify Vancouver by pushing out lower-income residents?
- Won't artificial boosting of land values through rezoning displace long-term homeowners through de facto expropriation?
- Won't established neighborhood businesses be driven out by the escalating rents in new construction?
- Should all amenities and infrastructure be charged to developers who pass along their costs to purchasers?
- Won't rapid and shortsighted development according to one pattern result in sterile urban monocultures, with loss of streetscape diversity and heritage?

Why should present demonstrated livability be sacrificed to theoretical density?
What value does EcoDensity place on the benefits (such as crime prevention) that stem from the organic social ecologies of established neighborhoods?
Won't areas singled out for mass rezoning become ongoing redevelopment slums?
Doesn't EcoDensity cater to nonresident real estate speculation, global hot money, and the use of real estate transactions for money laundering?

A Few Words from a Real Expert

Jane Jacobs's *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* has been described by the New York Times Book Review as "perhaps the most influential single work in the history of town planning." She played an instrumental role in preventing the Spadina expressway from devastating downtown Toronto. Her classic brings "EcoDensity" into serious question.

Excessive and Devastating Quantity Destroys Vitality

The relatively few city residential districts that do become outstandingly magnetic and successful at generating diversity and vitality are subjected ultimately to the same forces of self-destruction as downtowns. In this case, so many people want to live in the locality that it becomes profitable to build, in excessive and devastating quantity, for those who can pay the most. These are usually childless people, and today they are not simply people who can pay the most in general, but people who can or will pay the most for the smallest space. Accommodations for this narrow, profitable segment of population multiply, at the expense of all other tissue and all other population. Families are crowded out, variety of scene is crowded out, enterprises unable to support their share of the new construction costs are crowded out.

Find context and more extensive quotation at <http://www.vcn.bc.ca/norquay/jacobs.html>

Tuesday - February 26, 2008
Citizens Rally at 7:00 p.m

Vancouver City Hall – 453 West 12th Avenue at Cambie

Special City Council Meeting on EcoDensity
Register Ahead to Speak – Call 604-873-7276

If Public Speaking Is Not Your Thing, You Can Still Be Very Effective
Just Stand Up and Say One Sentence About What You Do or Do Not Support

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