

Norquay Newsletter

No. 1 – Fall 2008

PLANNERS COMING BACK TO NORQUAY

On November 29, 2008 Vancouver city planners will return to Norquay to restart a public planning process for a Norquay Village Neighbourhood Centre. Their June 2007 proposal to mass rezone 2400 single-family homes met with a strong negative response from the community.

Although planners have continued to meet with the Renfrew-Collingwood Vision Implementation Committee, a few details of this new planning have only been announced, not discussed. The City's second go at us has been developed without any community input.

The little advance information that has become available indicates that planners have conducted additional research on the Norquay area. It seems possible that they will offer a greater range of options to the community. The city may have abandoned its attempt to use a cookie-cutter approach based on planning for the first neighborhood center at Knight and Kingsway.

Substantial, ongoing community involvement in this restart of Norquay planning is needed to ensure that the city planners are better aware of our particular neighborhood's character and needs. Come out to the city planners' **Open House at Renfrew Park Community Centre, 2929 East 22nd Ave, Room 110, on Saturday, November 29, 2008, 12:00 to 4:00 pm.** Find out for yourself what is going on.

This upcoming Open House will be only the beginning of what the city plans to do in Norquay. Consider joining one of the planning committees that will begin work in 2009. Only through genuine citizen involvement will city employees and elected politicians remain accountable to the neighborhoods they serve.



Norquay Residents and Supporters Rally at City Hall Sept. 2007

What We in Norquay Need to Do Now

THE FIRST HALF OF 2009 will be a critical time for Norquay. It seems that the first of three day-long neighborhood workshops will be held in January. Even more important is the restart of existing consultation groups for **HOUSING** and **SHOPPING AREAS**. City planners have not yet made either the plans or the

If the City "consults" only with the same people who favored the June 2007 mass rezoning, the end result is less likely to reflect what the community really wants. The time to participate is now.

Many Norquay residents acted together when faced with inappropriate planning. Our working together has led

FOR NORQUAY RESIDENTS: OUR OWN MEETING

To DIRECT THE FUTURE OF OUR NEIGHBORHOOD

Wednesday December 3, 2008 – 7:00 pm to 9:30 pm

Community Centre Room 112, East 22nd Ave. at Renfrew

For More Information Telephone 604-433-2764

timeline very clear. Norquay needs new neighborhood representatives willing to get onto these particular committees and to attend about six meetings.

the city to reconsider its plans for Norquay. To have the kind of neighborhood that we want, we must get involved.

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READ THIS IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT OUR PROPERTY

~ LOTS MORE AT <http://www.vcn.bc.ca/norquay> ~

This Newsletter

The main purpose of this newsletter is to give Norquay residents a brief account of what has been happening in our neighborhood over the past two years or so.

The biggest story is our strong rejection of the city's sudden attempt to mass rezone about 2400 homes, which occupy some 200 acres of land. The rezoning proposal targeted an area even larger than what falls within the heavy black outline for "Norquay."

The map at right can be found on the city web site for Norquay and also on the front page of their June 2007 Draft Plan. Although the smaller oval area in the middle is described as offering "potential for new housing," the rezoning plan attempted to go much further.

Early on, Norquay residents suspected that the city's extreme proposal for the neighborhood was linked to a political push for EcoDensity. A group of about 40 residents picketed and leafleted at the city's June 23, 2007 EcoDensity forum.

City officials insisted that the plan for Norquay had "no connection" with the EcoDensity initiative. Yet research uncovered an official document from June 2007 that said:

EcoDensity is already influencing Centres planning, as exemplified by the review of new housing potential along Kingsway in the Norquay Village planning process.

Only prompt citizen action kept Norquay from becoming an easy trophy for premature EcoDensity.

Rezoning Tax Grab: No Real Relief

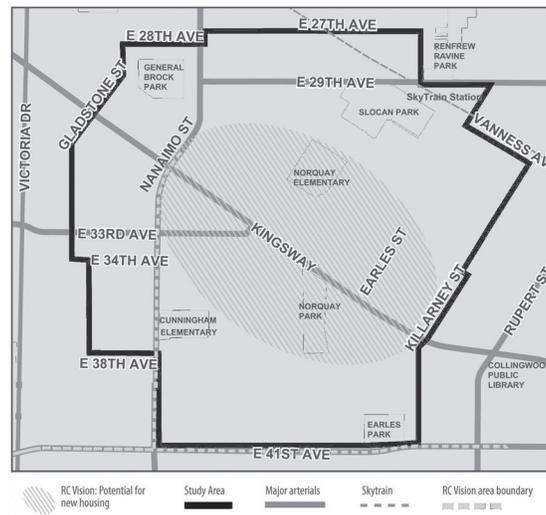
On August 1, 2007 the City of Vancouver issued a press release announcing that City Council had made unusual use of a "retroactive by-law amendment" to return an estimated \$840,000 to 1577 properties in the Kingsway-Knight area.

Tax problems arose when the city carried out its first mass rezoning on a neighborhood center. Norquay Neighbours picketed and leafleted at City Hall on the last two days of the 2006-2007 tax

year to call attention to the situation.

The typical tax returned to an affected property was expected to amount to \$450. The City claimed that reinstating

NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE STUDY AREA



three-year averaging solved the problem. However, Council's action only corrected a blatant unfairness. After three years, any relief from that tax averaging disappears.

City Council has done nothing to address the real tax impacts of mass rezoning. Any Vancouver resident unfortunate enough to live within the boundaries of a rezoned neighborhood center faces a property tax increase on top of any other undesirable effects.

The Draft Plan Trampled Our Community Vision

The front page of the city planning brochure tossed onto our front porches and sidewalks at the beginning of June 2007 made this claim: "Implementing the R-C Community Vision."

Our detailed analysis of the vision for Renfrew-Collingwood uncovered serious disregard for the vision statement unanimously approved by City Council in March 2004.

The entire Draft Plan violated this basic principle: "Most of the area that is now single family (including areas permitting rental suites) should be kept that way." The Draft Plan proposed to rezone every one of the 2400 single family houses in the Norquay area to allow for three (and up to a possible six or more) dwelling units per existing lot.

Attached to the Draft Plan was a large survey form with many questions. Three-quarters of those questions were about the placement of dense courtyard rowhouses throughout Norquay neighborhoods. The Community Vision approved by City Council had already clearly stated: "This option will not be considered if additional housing planning occurs in the community."

It seems clear that city planners did not respect either the Renfrew-Collingwood community or their own established planning processes. Many conversations with Norquay residents suggest that well over 90% of us did not want the radical neighborhood changes that the City of Vancouver tried to foist on us during summer vacation.

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Realize that Norquay belongs to us more than it does to professionals, bureaucrats, and developers. This is where we have our homes and live our lives.

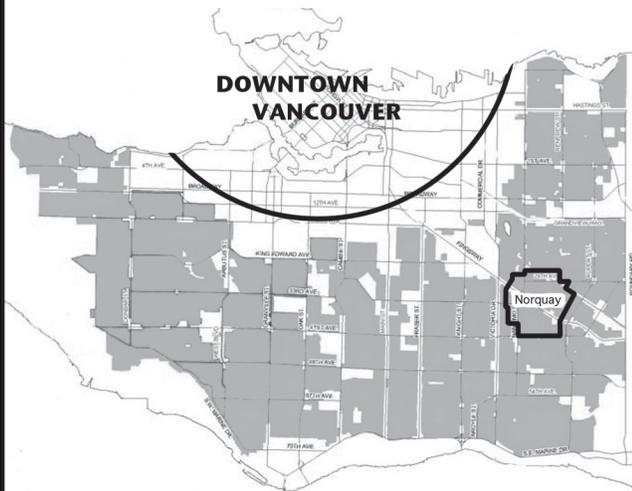
Understand that no one else will take care of our property and its surroundings as well as we will. All of us have to put our own time and resources into the maintenance and upkeep of our houses and apartments. In that same way it is necessary for us to put effort into understanding what is happening in our neighborhood and then to look out for our interests.

Believe that it is worthwhile to get involved in the city's plans for Norquay. We can already see that our recent activities have had an effect on planning. If we wait around until a formulated plan goes to City Council, then it probably will be too late to make much of a difference.

Keep an information file on Norquay, starting with your copy of this newsletter. Pay close attention to any materials sent to you by the City of Vancouver. Read the Vancouver Courier and clip relevant articles. A handy file of information will help you to deal with new situations involving your property.

Be very careful about what you tell city planners you want to see happen in our neighborhood when they ask for your opinion. (See opposite page: "When City Planners Ask...").

About RS Zoning



Today about 70,000 Vancouver lots fall under five different RS (single-family residence) zoning schedules. In the map provided above, the RS areas are shaded in gray.

RS zoning in Vancouver brings to mind the old saying about the value of land – they aren't making any more of it. Although rezoning may raise the sale value of land in some instances, it also increases the value of the other land that remains zoned RS, since

expenses often associated with strata title ownership.

The map suggests that RS zoning has receded as downtown Vancouver has developed. This organic historical pattern was distinctly abandoned in the city's attempt to mass rezone Norquay in 2007. Neighborhoods across Vancouver supported Norquay because they recognized that inappropriate development was threatening all RS properties.

there is less of it left. The financially naive tend to overlook this counter-argument to the personal economic benefits of having one's land rezoned for denser development.

Another desirable feature of RS zoning is that the holder of such a property does not get forced into paying the ongoing fees and uncontrollable

Your Land: Don't Let a Developer Profiteer

Just the possibility of a mass rezoning taking place in the Norquay area led one developer to negotiate conditional contracts along a particular street in the spring of 2007.

Two homeowners did not sign up and did not wish to sell. Eventually the agent offered close to twice the amount that the first signer on the block had agreed to. Still refusing to sell, these holdouts were then told their beloved gardens would get buried in shade.

Even for the highest offer, simple arithmetic showed that the developer really was not offering any significant premium to the current market price for the land.

If you are ever approached by a developer, be very careful and take your time. Talk to your neighbors and seek out good independent advice. Typically, an aggregating developer makes the big profits, not the individuals who sell land to the developer.

Rezoning Forum: Standing Room Only

Over two hundred people crowded into Collingwood Neighbourhood House on the rainy Friday evening of October 17, 2007 for a lively discussion of the City of Vancouver's spring 2007 proposal for mass rezoning in the Norquay area.

Four city councillors responded to the topic, Rezoning: Where Do You Stand? George Chow called the impact of rezoning on homeowner property taxes unacceptable. David Cadman said the Norquay neighborhood's community vision should be respected. Peter Ladner emphasized Vancouver's need to accommodate growth. Tim Stevenson recognized lack of consultation as a problem.

The event was sponsored by Norquay residents. At the June 2007 EcoDensity forum the City promised to provide such a neighborhood discussion, but that never happened.

When City Planners Ask You for Your Opinion ...

They may already have a specific idea of what they would like for you to say. The complex survey that was attached to the June 2007 Draft Plan brochure distributed in Norquay focused heavily on RM-1 zoning and courtyard rowhousing. Yet our neighborhood's Community Vision – based on an earlier survey of opinion – had already said that this very dense type of development would not receive further consideration.

When city planners did not get the survey results they wanted, they tried to withhold the results from Norquay residents. Several informal freedom of information requests followed by media exposure of the issue finally forced the City to release the results in January 2008, but only after hiring an "independent advisor" who said that the unwanted results should be disregarded. The city planners have not given up. Now they are coming back to see if they can make some case that Norquay has changed its mind.

Anything Besides a 'No' May Be Taken For a 'Yes'

When city planners have an agenda other than finding out what residents and taxpayers really want, the "results" of citizen input get subjected to serious spin. On June 10, 2008 the Director of Planning told City Council that EcoDensity was supported by 56% of respondents. The letters from the public about EcoDensity were posted to the City's web site.

Neighbourhoods for a Sustainable Vancouver (NSV) analyzed the 162 letters and concluded that the level of outright support was 23% – less than half of what was claimed! NSV is an ad hoc coalition of 29 neighborhood groups across Vancouver and includes connections with Norquay residents.

Get Connected

Send an email to Joe if you would like to receive occasional updates about happenings in Norquay..

jjones2340@gmail.com

IMPORTANT INFORMATION Please have this translated

重要資料 請找人為你翻譯

RENSEIGNEMENTS IMPORTANTS Prière de les faire traduire

これはたいせつなお知らせです。どなたかに日本語に訳してもらってください。

INFORMACIÓN IMPORTANTE Busque alguien que le traduzca

알려드립니다 이것을 번역해 주십시오

CHỈ DẪN QUAN TRỌNG Xin nhờ người dịch hộ

ਜ਼ਰੂਰੀ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਕਿਸੇ ਵਲੋਂ ਇਸ ਦਾ ਉਲੰਘਾ ਕਰਵਾਓ

Norquay Human Rights Complaint Against the City of Vancouver

In September 2007 Joseph Jones filed a human rights complaint against the City of Vancouver, because of the City's failure to communicate its June 2007 proposal for mass rezoning to approximately 700 households in Norquay whose first language is neither Chinese nor English.

City communications of importance normally display the eight-language notice reproduced above. The June 2007 Norquay Draft Plan with attached survey provided no such notice. (Besides that, the brochure was unaddressed, haphazardly distributed, and had the appearance of junk mail.)

Had Norquay residents not strongly opposed mass rezoning at the outset, the proposal probably would have gone forward with irreversible momentum and been approved by City Council in early 2008. Almost one-third of all Norquay residents would have faced a significant change to the status of their property without having been given a fair chance to understand what was happening.

In July 2008 the B.C. Human Rights Tribunal notified Jones that the complaint has been assigned a case number, and stated: "It appears that you are an appropriate representative for the group concerned." In August 2008 Jones provided the Tribunal with additional requested information. He is now waiting for further instructions..

Individuals affected by the City's apparent negligence are hereby advised of their right to opt out of the complaint. The progress of the complaint can be followed by checking for updates on the Norquay Neighbours web site:

<http://www.vcn.bc.ca/norquay>

Questions We Should Ask Norquay City Planners

Did you time your Open House for late November, hoping that we would be distracted by our Christmas planning and not show up?

What will you do to regain our trust and confidence after you trampled our Community Vision, allowed major rezoning at Kingsway and Nanaimo with no real process, and created a property tax problem with the rezoning at Kingsway and Knight?

Why are the **first four of nineteen** proposed neighborhood centers – the only ones that have any timeline set – all located on the east side of Vancouver? When Director of Planning Brent Toderian publicly said that the east side of Vancouver has been more accepting of density than the west side, why did he ignore Norquay? Is the City out to dump more density into the side of town that has already absorbed far more than its share?

Why did the City rezone 2300 Kingsway at Nanaimo ("The Hills") for a skyscraper that eventually grew to 24 stories **before** starting any comprehensive planning for Norquay Village? Why did the "amenity" promise of a grocery store mysteriously evaporate after the developer obtained a rezoning? Don't skyscrapers belong closer to downtown? Was this done to blockbust our neighborhood for real estate developers? Haven't respected planners said that there is no density need for such tall buildings?

Will your plans for Norquay Village produce housing that is as affordable as what we already have? Isn't this "planning" just the wedge of a gentrification that will push out the many low-income families that our neighborhood is housing right now? Isn't new construction always more expensive to rent or own?

Isn't Norquay unique in the list of nineteen locations for having almost no shopping now in the place where you propose to create a "neighborhood center"? If you rezone our residential areas **before** there is a real neighborhood center, isn't that cart before the horse? Will your "improvements" along Kingsway make the area too expensive for the good stores we already have, like Beefway Meats and McGavin's Bread Basket?

Is it fair for the City of Vancouver to use mass rezoning to increase property taxes on long term residents who just want to go on living in their homes? If this is not a tax grab, or a plan to tax residents out of the neighborhood, why wasn't the City willing to exempt existing residents?

For 1996-2006, among the 22 Vancouver neighborhoods, Renfrew-Collingwood ranked

Second Only to Downtown!

Rate of Population Increase: 17%
Rate of Dwelling Increase: 26.5%

(Calculated from City of Vancouver statistics derived from the Canada Census)

Growth Brings Benefits?

The City says that Norquay in Renfrew-Collingwood needs to grow a lot more, and that if we approve those plans, our neighborhood will improve.

Ask City Planners This:

Where is their list of all the good things that an extremely high rate of growth has brought our neighborhood since 1996???

WE DESERVE EVIDENCE NOT EMPTY PROMISES