

The Downtown Eastside Strathcona Coalition

Meets the 3rd Wednesday of each month 8pm to 8pm - Strathcona Community Centre - 601 Keefer St. - Phone 713-1838
Everyone is welcome

February 26th 1998

get in cars
No
no need to say anything
6 - 10 - 12 - 14 - 16 - 18 - 20 - 22 - 24 - 26 - 28 - 30
For Immediate Release

Title: Downtown Eastside Strathcona Coalition has major concerns about announcement of hotel purchases

While the DTES Coalition without question supports the creation of low cost social housing for our community we must comment on the announcement made on February 24th 1998 by David Levy and Mike Farnworth

The announcement concerns a plan to convert 2 downtown Vancouver hotels into social housing for people with mental health issues in their lives, people with AIDS and others who currently live in the community.

According to the press release the project will be financed jointly by the Vancouver Richmond Health board, BC Housing and the Ministry of Human Resources to the amount of 5 million dollars. "This is the first in a series of numerous creative projects" according to Housing Minister Mike Farnworth.

One issue highlights a communication problem.

The fact that this project came as a complete surprise to the community at large is worrisome.

A number of key decisions have been made in isolation from broad-based community input.

It is our position that when important community issues such as Mental Health, housing and AIDS are addressed and large amounts of public money are being spent it is imperative that the larger community be involved.

That means that all stakeholders are at least aware of the intentions of the project in advance of any public announcements and that there is broad-based representation around the planning table for any "community" project.

Many people did not know about this process until it was done.

Another issue has to do with the attitude that some people like David Levy and Jim Green have. They seem to think they know best who can do the job in the community. The fact that they see no need to involve themselves in any real community process begs to be challenged as nothing more than favoritism for a select few and as an outdated unfair method of community development.

This process must be open to a consultative community process immediately.

This could be similar to other successful models such as the City of Vancouver's Housing Plan consultation, the recent Ministry of Children and Families contract reorganization process or the Ministry of Skills community collaboration for setting training priorities for the coming year.

There is no substitute for direct and broad based community consultation. It is only then that all of the stakeholders are heard and that consensus is possible. It is an essential component in any real community development process that ensures the most efficient and efficacious allocation of scarce resources.

Our position is that the community, as a whole, needs to be included in the planning and the development phases of any large projects like this one. This involvement will prevent duplication and competition, insure the largest number of linkages to existing resources and the maximum involvement of the community.

Other issues include questions about whether the Washington Hotel is really available for purchase?

Was the announcement made before any substantive agreement had actually been made with the owner and if so why?

What happens to the current residents of the hotel(s) who do not suffer from mental health problems or AIDS? Many are worried now that their lives will be disrupted by this development?

The Coalition requests that as a condition of work on the project that young people and older residents from the community have an opportunity to be employed doing the renovations. This work and training component must be linked to government support, community associations and existing resources with an established track record who can train and support the workers while they are on site.

The DTES coalition supports inclusive, fair and equitable initiatives that are working partnerships involving all government and community stakeholders.

The Coalition wants to assure that if a government agency is working with "the community" to establish "best ways" that the process is open to everyone and is not limited. Anything short of that would be interpreted as exclusive, flawed and in this time of crisis in the DTES everyone must double their efforts to communicate and work together for the community's well being.

The DTES Coalition

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