

DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE/STRATHCONA COMMUNITY DIRECTIONS

MOBILIZATION AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZING PROCESS

INTRODUCTION

The DTES/Strathcona Communities have worked hard over the last months to develop an agreement and a plan to mobilize and organize as residents, organizations and groups to be an effective force in advocating for our neighborhoods. The communities's approach to the neighbourhood development intends to benefit local low-income residents, to avoid displacement and ensure that it is community input and control that is the main force behind the directions in the community building, planning and implementation.

BACKGROUND

Not so long ago the Downtown Eastside was the flourishing cosmopolitan centre of Vancouver. Today it is a community in crisis. A walk along Hastings Street reveals the severe difficulties facing this community! Stores boarded up, drug abuse, prostitution, street crime, an HIV epidemic and premature deaths are realities of the Downtown Eastside. Most people see only the squalor. What lives there, in reality, is a vibrant community held together by a powerful support network of families, friends, community organizations, agencies and multicultural communities. The Downtown Eastside is home for thousands of families and individuals. Above all it is a community of diverse, caring, and talented people!

Recently, there has been an increased interest in the Downtown Eastside by government agencies, developers, and institutions including the universities and colleges, which want to be a part of developing the area. These interests do not seem to benefit the low-income residents. Hotels and rooming houses have been bought up and renovated to suit tourists and others who can afford the higher prices. Condominium homes for more high-income residents continue to be built while the present residents live in sub human conditions. A "clean up the area" mentality is what the media, some businesses and others see as the solution. This approach has caused great concern for the community. After many attempts at committee meetings, City Council meetings, and governmental coalitions (i.e. The Mayor's Coalition), to explain how plans without the community will fail to meet the needs of all, the community has decided to take another approach.

Community Solutions: Encouraging Community Effort and Direction

Process and structure for community participation and decision making.

The development of this process and structure has been accomplished over a period of a two months of meetings with residents, members and staff of various community organizations in the Downtown Eastside/Strathcona area.

The vision of this process is to have those who live in the Downtown Eastside/Strathcona Community:

- involved in the discussions and the resolutions to issues that concern them,
- to have an inclusive and accessible process that will result in a broad agreement or consent for direction concerning the issues
- develop plans or positions to present to possible partners for implementation
- where possible implement the plans

This process and structure is to be used:

- for the development of unity or broad community consent statements concerning various issues and;
- to provide direction for implementation of the community solutions for various issues concerning the DES.

So far in the last six weeks, folks attending the meetings have also put together a statement of Concern about Urban Development Agreements/Revitalization (see attached). This statement will be used to inform others of "Community Solutions" and to encourage their participation in the discussions and the development of the solutions to the issues that concern them.

Attached is a diagram of the proposed process and structure.

A Process Team will oversee the mobilization effort.

A **Process team** drawn from residents, organizations and resource people will be formed. They will not make decisions for the community with regards to the above issues. They will oversee the community process to ensure wide resident participation and ensure the ability to participate.

The community process involves three areas:

- community mobilization - how to get diverse groups and residents involved with the issues
- planning – plan strategies (i.e. events, workshops etc.) to facilitate the community moving toward wide consent on certain issues, address conflict areas or controversial issues etc.
- training process (determine what training folks need to participate i.e. how to run meetings, understanding city policies etc.)

They will work with Resource teams (see below) to ensure that participation has been broad and consent is also broad for a particular position or area. Principles and guidelines drawn up with

community participation will guide them.

The Process Team through a community consultation process will hire **Paid Organizers** to carry out the above functions and coordinate with the Resource/Mobilizing Teams. They will implement or oversee the training process determined by the Process Team. They will also work with the lead teams in determining the principles/conditions for the partner tables.

Six strategic areas identified: Housing, Safety, Alcohol and Drugs, Child/Youth, Sustainable Economic Development and women's issues are present focus points for work. Within each of these areas the points that have broad community consent will be taken forward as community solutions, some as positions, others with complete strategies and action plans for implementation. Examples of this include - the Housing Plan organized by the Carnegie Action project, A& D treatment and detox etc. or a position re: replacement of lost SRO's etc.

Resource/Mobilizing Teams would be put together under each of the above topic areas (people/organizations with experience history with subject). They will, with the process team develop the content for events and other ways to explore the issues with the community. They will then determine the **positions and actions that have the broadest consent** in the community within the topic. In some cases much of this has happened and it will be a matter of re-confirming consent areas or plans with community residents i.e. housing plan.

Part of the mobilizing teams could be paid positions made up of residents in the community with specific organizing skills and/or willingness for training to plan and implement events/workshops etc. to move the issues to broad community consent.

Positions and actions that have broad consent from the community in each strategic area will be taken forward by a **lead team** to a city table or for other agreed upon place for action. The **city table** is a coming together of various partners and/or levels e.g. province, city, federal, and others such as universities, business, economic development etc.

There has been a concern raised that a community lead team could become part of politics between governments or other partners at the city table. The sole job of the lead team is to work with partners from the city table to "make happen" the strategic plans or concepts in terms of consent area. They will be in continuous contact with the Process team. When there is a blocking of an area of consent at this table, or an inability to move forward with a consent plan then the lead team will bring it back to the broader community process where:

- The community may decide to fight for the plan or concept or
- The community will determine another course of action, such as returning to the city table to negotiate based on parameters established by the community.

An example - say for instance the resident discussions led to an economic development consent strategy that was to see that income assistance recipient would be allowed to have earning exceptions removed or raised so they could participate in this community mobilizing process and earn money. The idea would be that interested people could be paid for learning how to organize, mobilize folks, involve people in discussions, develop strategies, to help and be a part

of changing the quality of life in the community. This idea (that has gone through community consent) would be taken to the city table and the partners (the provincial government, city councilors, college/university folks) would be asked to figure out a way they could make this happen within their systems. The lead team would then negotiate or work with table partners within parameters established in the community consent process.

Perhaps the Provincial government would see if they could do a pilot and they would bring together needed people in Human Resources. Perhaps the city would help the community establish a way set up volunteer opportunities and offer extra financial enabling incentives etc. Perhaps the colleges and universities could participate in getting the training going or folks could get certificates or credit for the training.

Asset Inventory: This is a process to gather information about the community. It includes research that has been completed, process work and decisions and results, other documents or work using a chronological reporting structure. Asset inventory includes people in the community, organizations, places, projects, and services. It also can include whether these places are service based or mobilizing based. All these are brought together to help make what the community wants to happen...happen. This requires funding.

PROPOSED PLAN OF ACTION:

Phase One:

- Begin community process of consultation re: Community Solutions: Encouraging Community Effort and Direction. Form initial Process team May/June 99, to determine process and structure.
- Write DES Community Statement of Concern about Urban Development Agreements/Revitalization (see attached).

Phase Two:

- Meet with City to determine ability to agree on resources and possible use of federal funding to achieve community mobilization and planning goals, structures and some principles for city table/working together.

Phase Three:

- Begin asset inventory (with resources from the Vancouver Foundation?)
- Process Team/community begin determining team resources for issue areas (who to have on them, what skills/knowledge required i.e. residents, resource people)
- Process Team/community make decision for representatives of on-going, committed Process Team (who will represent, what skills/knowledge required)
- Process Team/community initiate planning of mobilization and involvement of residents (how, when).

Phase Four:

- Process Team to Hire Organizers.
- Process Team/Organizers begin:
 - training of residents/volunteers as organizers/facilitators etc.
 - mobilization plans are started by teams and organizers
 - Resource teams hold events, areas of broad community consent determined, strategies, concepts developed
 - Assign lead teams for each of the consent areas to be taken to city table for assistance/partnering/joint action
 - to address areas of conflict through development of appropriate mechanisms
 - to continue to explore issues without broad consent to see if consent or agreement can be reached, or the issue tackled differently

Downtown Eastside / Strathcona Community Mobilization Process

Guiding Principles

Overriding Principle: Social justice for the more vulnerable sectors of the community is recognized as the overriding principle to this process. This means that we strive to ensure the basic rights of the poorest and most vulnerable in our community, e.g. decent affordable housing, access to public space, and safety within the Downtown Eastside / Strathcona community.

Operational Principles;

- ◆ open, voluntary, and accessible to all residents in the Downtown Eastside / Strathcona
- ◆ demonstrates inclusiveness, integrity and honesty
- ◆ represents the diversity in the low-income community
- ◆ open to the participation of allies in the business community and adjoining neighbourhoods
- ◆ seeks broad consent for effective strategies in the areas of Housing, Alcohol and Drugs, Safety, Sustainable Economic Development, and Child, Youth and Families
- ◆ works towards the goal of trust building within the community and among neighbouring communities
- ◆ *Seeks participation of all residents of the DES/Strathcona.*

NOTE: The Downtown Eastside / Strathcona Community Mobilization Process is an organizing process that brings the primarily low-income community together before going to a wider community or city table.

We offer these principles as a framework for the larger process as well. However, we recognize that the operating principles would need some minor amendment in the broader context in order to be inclusive of the business sector and other participants.

ORGANIZATIONS

Britannia Elementary
Britannia Center
Carnegie CAP
CAPC Parents DTES/Strathcona
CAPC Parents Crabtree
CAPC Parents Grandview Woodlands
Common Concerns *
DERA
DEYAS*
DTES Neighbourhood Safety Office
DTES/Strathcona Coalition
Facilitators Group
Franciscan Sisters of the Atonement
Inner City Childcare/supported childcare Network 2
Lutheran Urban Mission Society
Portland Hotel
Ray-Cam
Seymour PAC*
Stamps Place Residents
Strathcona Resource Center
Stylewood Intern.
Tradeworks Training Society
Vancouver Native Health*
Vancouver Second Mile Society
Vietnamese Seniors Group
Vancouver Foundation
Watari

?
First United Church
St. James
← Strathcona Center
Strathcona Residents
Pride Center
Main and Hastings
Lookout
Womens Center
YWCA-Crabtree
Triage
CRAB
Urban Core and members
Urban Youth Alliance
VANDU
Consumer Board
Carnegie assoc

Not approached as yet
.Area Housing Co-ops
.Residents from social housing
Associations
.?????
.Local credit unions/banks
Community banks

RESIDENTS SIGNED TO DATE:
46

*What is the * for faxed to RayCan
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