SPECIAL MEETING
AGENDA
EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING

LOCATION: Council Chambers
Council Building, 510 Main Street
DATE: March 17, 2008
TIME: 9:00 a.m.

MEMBERS: His Worship Mayor Katz, Chairperson
Deputy Mayor Leipsic
Councillor Clement
Councillor O'Shaughnessy
Councillor Steeves
Councillor Swandel
Councillor Wyatt

WINNIPEG PUBLIC SERVICE:
Mrs. J. Park, Mgr. the Decisions Making Process
Mr. A. Robinson, Acting Chief Administrative Officer
Mrs. U. Goeres, City Solicitor/Manager of Legal Services, Internal Services Department
Mr. B. R. Gary, Mayor's Director of Policy, Manager EPC Secretariat

PRESENTED BY: Harold Martinos, Vice Chair
West Alexander Residents Association, Inc.
Chair, West Alexander Residents Association, Inc.
c/o 609 Bannatyne Avenue
Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3A 0G9

Dear Executive Policy Committee Members:

I have asked Harold Martinos to present these remarks on behalf of the West Alexander Residents' Association, Inc. My comments are specific to issue of housing and funding for the Winnipeg Homelessness and Housing Initiative. This letter was first presented to the Housing Steering Committee on 29 February 2008.

West Alexander Residents Association, Inc. (WARA) has been in existence since August 2006. We have devoted energy to getting our association up and running with the help of the Community Education Development Association. Among our major concerns are housing and safety, however, of late, our concern has focused on the City's Secondary Planning Process for West Alexander and Centennial. Several of our members were resident representatives on this Committee. Every time we went to the Secondary Plan meetings, we had the feeling that we were going to our own funeral and this feeling, along with the knowledge of the contents the plan colours our opinions on WHHI. I will try to explain why.

West Alexander has yet to experience the benefits of funding for housing. If anything, the area has suffered from the attrition of dwelling units that has taken place to make way to build a parking structure on Tecumseh Avenue and the new Pharmacy building on McDermot Avenue. We have also continued to lose houses to fires and see dwelling units boarded up or left vacant. Empty lots continue to grow and it's difficult to get inspectors out to look at properties or to act on bylaw enforcement. For example, we have been working for nearly a year to have a 24-long truck trailer removed from the backyard of a residential property on Bannatyne Avenue. A City zoning officer says that it's allowable, yet it is not permitted under the bylaws.

There have been some sales of homes in the area and prices have increased but this is more a reflection of the general rise in real estate prices across the city and the trickle down effect. Anyone who buys a house here to live in has to show a lot of faith or is naïve. They must learn to live with traffic, prostitution, crack houses, vacant lots, boarded up houses, negative commercial uses like bars, and so on. We have not reached the point where an owner of a property in West Alexander can earn enough by sale of his/her property to purchase a home elsewhere. If anything, this area has experienced a net loss of people.

Our Association is about to embark on a small housing improvement program funded by the Province. However, the total amounts to only $25,000, so the impact will not be significant.

In the near future, we would like to see our area designated as a Housing Improvement Zone (HIZ). However, without a housing plan, this seems to be difficult. We made this request to the Housing Steering Committee on July 17, 2007 and have yet to hear their decision. Plus the draft Secondary Plan has in the meantime designated an area that contains 389 addresses, mostly single houses (amounting to one third of West Alexander)

as an expansion zone for the Health Sciences Centre. The future is uncertain for people living in this area. It is for all of us. This Plan states that there is to be no net loss of housing but this does not mean that the replacement housing will be affordable or appropriate for the people who live there now.

For us, the Homelessness and Housing Initiative is rather like a mirage or like looking through a store window with an empty wallet. We can't access it as we are not considered a HIZ. Certainly we support it on principle with the hope that one day it might be useful to us. Perhaps if we have access and the funds are increased to two million dollars or more, we might be able to make some positive change on housing in our neighbourhood. In the meantime our uncertain future will continue.

Thank you for this opportunity for comment.

Sincerely,

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Catherine Collins
Chair, West Alexander Residents Association, Inc.
c/o 609 Bannatyne Avenue
Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3A 0G9