Copy - blue

Submission to Executive Policy Committee
January 5, 2005

Phyllis Watson

Winnipeg, MB

The proposed Waverley West Development is big. It is probably the biggest single development ever undertaken in Winnipeg.

The Administrative report tabled yesterday equates it in size to the total size of Lindenwoods, Whyte Ridge, Waverley Heights and Richmond West, which have developed over the past 25 years.

I have in the past compared it to Windsor Park, Southdale, Island Lakes and Royalwood which have been 50 years in the developing.

It was all part of that post-WW2 shift to the suburbs.

We have now a significant body of independent study by professionals in the fields of land-use planning and sustainable development, and those studies tell us what the effect has been in cities all over North America,

We know what the effect has been in our City.

THIS IS EXHIBIT "80" REFERRED TO
IN FILE NO. EP-1.1 (FW 2/2003)
DATED THIS 4TH DAY OF JAN 20 05
J Park
CLERK

Phyllis Watson

We have turned our backs and walked away from the heart of our City and its deterioration has been progressing for 50 years.

In a recent column in the Winnipeg Free Press, Gerald Flood put a human face on this phenomen. Looking at a Statistics Canada report entitled "Low Income in Census Population Areas" he wrote:

> **Winnipeg is unique in Canada in that it has been unable -- or unwilling -- to repair its poor heart so that today it looks on a map much like the worst of hollowed out U.S. cities ... a poor, decaying urban ghetto...**
>
> **The report... essentially says the following:**
>
> **The populations of aboriginal people and new immigrants in Winnipeg's bullseye -- the red zone -- are bigger than in other Canadian cities and growing.**

It makes one think that perhaps there is a different housing crisis than the one we have been hearing about. The very people who we expect to bring us that boost in population, that "good news story", are in desperate need of a better community in which to live. And it won't be a "good news story" unless we deal with those living conditions.

In the past decade we have been trying to come to grips with what it will take to revitalize our downtown and preserve the surrounding older neighbourhoods.

It has taken years of soul-searching, and more recently significant public and private investment to even begin the turn-around, and we <u>have</u> just begun.

There won't be any quick fix.

It has taken two generations to get to where we are now, and we should be prepared for it to take at least a generation of concerted effort to reverse it.

Plan Winnipeg 2020 was developed with this other crisis in mind.

It is predicated on a Community Vision (p 4) affirming ten factors upon which the quality of life of Winnipeg residents is dependent, including:

- a vibrant downtown and safe healthy neighbourhoods
- development that is well planned and orderly
- convenient access and mobility to all parts of the city
- supportive and well maintained urban infrastructure

With this vision in mind, City Council outlined 6 Principles to guide its policy makers.

The one which is germane to our discussion today is the 3rd one:

> Thoughtful development - evaluating the costs and benefits of development proposals. The intent is to take maximum advantage of existing infrastructure through increased densities and compact form, to commit to inner city revitalization and heritage conservation, and to provide integrated transportation options.

Plan Winnipeg 2020 then "builds on this foundation" with a "hundred or so" policy statements grouped under various headings, but section 1 is entitled "Downtown and Neighbourhoods" and it is very clear that healing the heart of our city will be the first priority, against which all other decisions must be measured.

It is this Plan which you are being asked to "amend" today.

You are being asked to "amend" it by opening up a vast new tract of previously undeveloped land to suburban development.

In reality, you are being asked to trash it, to turn your backs on the vision and principles which the citizens of Winnipeg embraced in an attempt to begin the long road to recovery for the heart of our City.

Has there been some new research debunking the studies we have been reading?

Have the Citizens of Winnipeg changed their minds about the factors that define their quality of life?

Has the Council lost faith in the principles it committed to 3 years ago?

Has there been some monumental change in the underlying growth projections?

I don't think so.

Before the ink was dry on this document, it became clear that the majority owners of Waverley West had a different "vision". In June 2001 Mr James Gallagher, then of Dillon Consulting, prepared, at the request of the Province of Manitoba, a "Preliminary Feasibility Study of the South Fort Garry Land Bank".

With the Province of Manitoba being the owner of the largest tract in Waverley West this has been no ordinary developer's request.

The citizens of Winnipeg, however, have the right to expect that the spirit of the Planning Document which they developed less than four years ago will be respected.

The hundred or so policies built on the foundation of Plan Winnipeg's vision cover every aspect of the city's responsibilities, but 26 of them (with 116 subsections) deal directly with planning, development, transportation and infrastructure.

The Administrative Report tabled yesterday maintains that studies provided by the developers address Plan Winnipeg's Policies. In fact they have "cherry-picked" 15 subsections from 8 of the policy statements to address.

Moreover, the report does not make it clear exactly how in "addressing" even those 15 items any case was made that the proposal conformed with them.

It certainly was not clear to me when I read those reports, and it was not clear to me in the barrage of statistics, tables and graphs to which we were subjected yesterday. And what particularly bothered me was that the underlying assumptions, for instance on the ratio of single-family and multi-family units, so often was the "status quo", and "status quo" is not our goal.

Considerable emphasis was laid on one particular statement 3B-08(iii). That's the one that says the the redesignation of Rural Land to Neighbourhood is only allowable under certain circumstances and we were reminded several times what those circumstances are, and that they are all here in spades. After a while, I began to think that perhaps we ought to call 3B-08(iii) Plan Winnipeg's "notwithstanding clause".

To reiterate, this is not an amendment, it is an abandonment.

We do have a housing crisis.

We have an extreme shortage of adequate, safe, housing for the majority of the people who are moving to our city.

They are living in "The Red Zone" and if we do not change that we will lose the next generation - the ones who we hope will attend our schools, get good jobs, and join the mainstream and ensure our economic future. We will lose them to gangs, to drugs, to crime, and hopelessness.

The Waverley West solution is this. Build more high-end suburban housing, entice people who are already well-housed in fine neighbourhoods to "move up and out", and the "trickle-down" effect will be that the houses they vacate will become available. The only trouble is that it doesn't work - we've been doing that for 50 years and it is not the answer.

The better solution is this. Invest our financial and human resources instead in recreating the heart of our City - a living heart with safe clean urban neighbourhoods, a mix of housing and services which will serve our new immigrants, our young people, our aging hippies, our committed walkers and bikers. Forward-thinking cities are accomplishing this. The million dollar condos in Vancouver's downtown that we heard about yesterday are sharing the neighbourhood, even in some cases their buildings with affordable housing projects. Young families are moving in, and they are two new elementary schools, right there.

Plan Winnipeg 2020 envisioned this better way.

Let's not turn our backs on it.