Presentation to the Executive Policy Committee of the City of Winnipeg
In Opposition to Waverley West
January 5th, 2005

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Good Morning Mr. Chairman, Councillors, everyone

After having spent the day here yesterday listening to arguments in favour of developing Waverly West, I went home and made some additions to this presentation. You can find the amended version on our website at crowinc.org, click on Presentations and it's the first one.

I should introduce myself. My name is Glenda Whiteman. I am currently the Executive Director of the non-profit environmental organization known as Concerned Residents of Winnipeg or CROW, Inc. Thank you for the privilege of speaking before you today. I would like you to know that after hearing some of your questions and comments yesterday, I went home with a good deal more respect for some of you than I came with.

I regret that I did not take notes. If I had, I might have been better able today to dispute some of the statements, predictions and suppositions that were thrown around this room yesterday. As it is, I have more questions than answers.

Ladco Homes and other members of the Homebuilders Association, who were out in full force yesterday, would have us believe that there is a crucial shortage of lots in Winnipeg. They would also have us think that there is great urgency to solve this problem immediately and that the solution is to amend Plan Winnipeg now so that we can move on to step 2 planning, a.s.a.p. In spite of the fact that this message was repeated several times, I find I am still not quite clear on what exactly is the urgency? I am also not convinced. I am not convinced that we cannot house our people within our existing structure, without resorting to turning green-space into asphalt, depleting other neighbourhoods, and creating yet another community to be serviced. Creating another community the size of Brandon. The size of Brandon. **To be serviced**.

We have empty schools. Our existing community clubs are supposedly beyond repair. We have a transit system that cannot adequately service the existing suburbs and a council that declined bus rapid transit. Yet, we had speakers yesterday trying to have us believe that Waverly West comes complete with rapid transit. Like magic.

I also find myself unable to understand why it is so important to cater to the wishes of those who want to live in the southern regions, while communities in the east, north, west and downtown deteriorate before our very eyes. Your constituencies, if I am not mistaken, for

most of you.

There were some things said yesterday, however, that I do agree with. For example, yes, can we please start building homes that use sustainable heating? (And I hope you understand that I am not referring to hydro-electricity.) Do we need more walkable communities? Yes. Could existing communities be denser? Yes. Is there too much ex-urban development? Yes. Is there too much suburban development? Yes. The solution is not another suburb.

Those of you who have heard me speak about pesticides in the past will know that I usually come equipped with cases of books and references, the message being, please don't believe me, please believe these other experts. I am just a Concerned Resident of Winnipeg; just a messenger.

Once again today, I feel I am not an expert speaking to you. I have not studied urban development. I am not a city planner. I speak before you as a Concerned Resident of Winnipeg. Concerned about where you are taking our city. Concerned about who is running our city. Concerned about what kind of city we want to inhabit.

Before I began writing the first version of this presentation on Monday, I was also concerned about what to say given the previous admissions. So, I was grateful to speak to people here who have studied Urban Development, who tell me that there are solutions which do not have to include building a new city within our city. I was also grateful for the good coverage of this issue provided by the Free Press. In case you missed it, I would like to borrow some very salient points made by others who took the time to write. Thanks to the Free Press for publishing these letters on Monday, January 3rd.

"Waverly West is more urban sprawl, the No. 1 reason why our city core has been permitted to deteriorate to the point where large areas can properly be labelled as slums. What is needed is courage, imagination and guts to do what other aggressive cities have done." (Manuel Silverman)

And J. Aaron Griffiths writes, "the city should rework the property tax system...Unfortunately, for such powerful measures to be taken would be uncharacteristically bold of both the Winnipeg and Manitoba governments."

Well, let us be serious. We know precisely where the Manitoba government sits on this issue. Who stands to benefit from the creation of a Waverly West? We all know that the answer is Ladco Homes and the Manitoba government. Or so they think. They think that the City of Winnipeg will have to provide the services and they will reap the profits. Because they are not thinking about the future. They are thinking about a cash cow now.

However, it is not the City's responsibility to step in and save the provincial government from its poor planning. The City of Winnipeg already has a plan. That plan does not include more urban sprawl. There are experts who know about such things. There are people who know how to develop existing neighbourhoods to provide the kind of affordable housing

newcomers to Winnipeg will be needing. Newcomers who probably will not have a vehicle for years, if ever. You admit that our transit system, sewer system and recreation facilities cannot effectively service the sprawling areas we already have, yet you must now consider allowing even more to be developed. So that Ladco Homes and the Province of Manitoba can profit while the City goes deeper in debt and continues to crumble.

Let me tell you from experience that indeed it does take courage, imagination and guts to stand up to government. To stand up (or sit down) and say, hey what you are doing is wrong. It is not in our best interest. It will not preserve this land that we are borrowing from our grandchildren.

So what remains to be seen is how bold can the City of Winnipeg be? Do you have the courage, imagination and guts to stand up to government? To say NO to Big Brother on Broadway?

By the way, having courage does not mean the absence of fear; it means you do the right thing, in spite of your fear. Do the right thing. Say no to Waverly West. Vote no to changing Plan Winnipeg.

Thank you.

Glenda Whiteman :)