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A Submission from the Spence Neighbourhood Association on the Waverly West Development

What is important in the development of our city is to maintain the focus on inner city revitalization. If the city will honor its principle of *Thoughtful Development*, then 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 2020)

Infrastructure and Social Costs vs. Revenue

The city and province will stand to make a short term profit from this development, but the long term costs of additional infrastructure, including schools, libraries, park space, policing and transportation, have not been sufficiently factored into the financial analysis. Renovation of current houses and upgrade of infrastructure is actually more cost effective for the City than starting over but it is more complex and doesn't benefit developers the same way. Not only the expansion of roads but the expansion of public transportation will be required. This will again affect those who can least afford it. In the past the city has chosen to dilute its public transit system to service new neighbourhoods, resulting in those who have other options choosing to drive and those without options having less access to work. All of which has an adverse environmental and social impact.

The City of Winnipeg is looking towards tax profits from the expansion of suburban, single family housing. This city could profit more dramatically from the benefits of social investments in existing city neighbourhoods. Improved schooling for war effected youth and others that are struggling to find a place in the current streamlined system, could lead them to become productive, tax paying citizens as adults. However, there are no current studies being presented as to what that additional tax revenue or the relief on police services, this type of investment could bring.

What Kind of Population Increase?

The city's population has remained steady over the last year. The city statistics say that future increases in population will be mainly from the aboriginal community and from new immigration. We are told there are not enough lots to house the increase in population, but the reality seems to be that we do not have enough lots to support the large single family developments that turn a good profit for the housing developers. The projections counting future lot development at 4 units per acre are catering to the large suburban houses and the incomes that go with them. Certainly in the inner city we are experiencing a housing crisis. This crisis directly affects many of the new immigrant families and aboriginal population who are expected to raise the numbers of people in

Winnipeg over the next decades. The opening of Waverly West does not address their needs. Furthermore these people will need the services and the amenities that the downtown already has in place. These new residents coming from other places in the province, the country or the world together with the current inner city residents, need more alternative, affordable forms of housing.

Neither does the new development address the needs or desires of those who are looking for the much larger lots and lower taxes outside the city boundaries. Waverly West will not prevent the growth of bedroom communities. The people buying the homes provided in Waverly Heights will largely be people that live in our presently established neighborhoods.

Who will buy the homes they vacate? Very likely, some of the people that are now living downtown. This will be even truer if inner city residents do not see the city putting the necessary funds into making the downtown a safer and more attractive place to live. Any inner city community, in order to be thriving, needs to have a diverse income base. If the people in the mid-income level leave the inner city then we will once again face the possibility of having a downtown ghetto.

Let's Finish What We Started

In order to make sure that we do once again have a vital thriving downtown the city needs to keep their commitment to the original Plan Winnipeg. The city and the developers will need to market the downtown and the city will have to ensure that the supports and services are there to make our downtown appealing. All of this will take money. A great deal of government as well as private money has been poured into downtown to rejuvenate it. We have the MTS center and the expansion of the U of W, as well as Red River College. These initiatives will need to be supported by appropriate housing to create a safer more viable inner city community.

The current physical infrastructure also needs repair. The road budget is depleted every year and the sewers down town continue to overflow. The 3 levels of government made commitments to the revitalization of the inner city by allocating millions of dollars towards housing and infrastructure redevelopment .This revitalization has not yet been completed. Although there is talk of financing inner city renewal through this new development no mechanism is in place to guarantee money will come back to the inner city from Waverly West. A clear explanation of how the money promised by developers will be reinvested into the existing inner city neighbourhoods is needed.

This request to open up Waverly West is being driven by the current market demand with little consideration as to whether it creates the "Winnipeg" the City has been planning for in the long term. The city and private investors in conjunction with many neighborhood groups and non-profit organizations have made a great start on bringing back our downtown. Let us not lose the momentum for the sake of profit or the vote of special interest groups.