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MEMORANDUM

October 29, 2008

To: Mayor and Council

From: Vancouver City Planning Commission

cc: Brent Toderian, Director, Planning  
Ronda Howard, Assistant Director, City-wide and Regional Planning  
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Judy Rogers, City Manager  
Janice MacKenzie, Deputy City Clerk

Subject: Laneway Housing in Single Family Areas - Issues and Options

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The Vancouver City Planning Commission (VCPC) supports the adoption of Lane Way Housing (LWH), with consideration to the following comments.

1. LWH policy must be put into action in a timely manner.
2. The case for laneway housing should be presented proactively by the City to the public. Websites and online resources should be used to give citizens a clear idea of what laneway housing will look like "on the ground" in our neighbourhoods.
3. LWH should emphasize the creation of affordable rental choices.
4. It is hoped that LWH does not result in burdensome tax increases that will discourage new development by homeowners, and that the City will use its influence with tax authorities in this regard.
5. Development in Vancouver's laneways should be coordinated by the building permits office as much as possible to reduce impact on neighbourhoods. Not doing so might result in one lane experiencing long periods of construction, which would generate noise, disrupt traffic and impede garbage collection services.
6. We support efforts to make laneways more green and inviting. New permeable attractive paving materials should be used to enhance lanes. Where laneway homes exist, the visual appeal of the lane should try to rival our best residential streets. Amenities such as green spaces, flower gardens, and some lighting should be used to improve the surroundings.

7. The City should respond aggressively to challenges around litter and dumping in lanes.
8. Laneway homes should be built to allow for clear sightlines toward the lane. We expect residents of single-family homes to be the 'eyes and ears' that help improve community safety. With increased population, community safety must not be sacrificed for the sake of providing more affordable housing. Vancouver ought to proactively take steps to enhance neighbourhood safety and security.
9. The design of laneway homes should complement, and not detract from the community. While the City has not been very specific in its requirements for single-family home design, LWH policy might begin to enforce higher design standards, or provide design guidelines to Vancouver's community of builders.
10. Details around parking, mail delivery and residential addresses should be considered, but not become barriers, to the adoption of LWH policy.

By adopting a laneway housing policy, Vancouver faces head-on one of the great challenges of sustainable planning: how to commit to increased density in single-family neighbourhoods in ways that these communities will embrace.

We hope that LWH policy is finalized through continuing consultation with neighbourhoods & homeowners, and becomes another example of the City of Vancouver's leadership in creating a sustainable city that responds to the needs of its citizens.