



POLICY REPORT  
DEVELOPMENT AND BUILDING

Report Date: March 17, 2012  
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Meeting Date: March 28, 2012

TO: Standing Committee on Planning, Transportation and Environment

FROM: Assistant Director of Planning (Central Area Planning)

SUBJECT: West End Mayor's Advisory Committee (WEMAC) Recommendations - 2011  
Community Priorities Survey

***RECOMMENDATION***

THAT Council refer to staff for further consideration as part of the West End community planning process, the West End Mayor's Advisory Committee (WEMAC) recommendations contained in their report "Community Priorities for the West End" dated July 20, 2011, as identified in Column II in Appendix 'A' of this report;

AND FURTHER THAT Council refer the recommendations as identified in Column III in Appendix 'A' to the relevant staff teams addressing city-wide policies in affordable housing, transportation planning, economic development and public engagement to ensure the recommendations are considered in the context of on-going city-wide policy development.

***REPORT SUMMARY***

Council has requested options for implementing the West End Mayor's Advisory Committee's (WEMAC) 23 recommendations regarding transportation, housing, neighbourhood design, livability, public space and facilities, commercial/retail characteristics and the public engagement in the development process.

WEMAC submitted their report last fall to provide advice to Mayor and Council on community priorities for West End residents and citizens, as an interim step pending the initiation of community planning in the neighbourhood. It is anticipated that the preparation of the community plan will begin in the West End in early spring 2012.

The basic thrust being proposed by staff for moving forward on the WEMAC recommendations is to consider the 14 recommendations solely relevant to the West End as part of the forthcoming community planning initiative. The Terms of Reference for the West End Community Plan being considered for approval by Council identify six themes which will be

the focus of policy development - Housing, Heritage, Neighbourhood Character, Local Economy and Transportation. The 14 WEMAC recommendations (see Appendix 'A' - Column II) noted above can be incorporated into policy development under these topics.

The eight WEMAC recommendations (see Appendix 'A' - Column III) pertaining to city-wide transportation policies, the Housing and Homelessness Strategy and the City's Economic Action Strategy or the provincial government can be referred to the appropriate staff group addressing these policy areas in a city-wide or provincial context. This will ensure that each of the recommendations and their intent are considered in the context and knowledge of relevant policy development or the appropriate government jurisdiction. Two of these eight recommendations noted above can be considered in both contexts - city-wide policy development, with pertinent advice from the West End community planning initiative.

One of the goals of the West End Community planning initiative is to complete community consultation and policy development in a shorter time frame than previous community planning processes while also ensuring there is meaningful consultation and outreach in the West End where more than 44,000 people live and many businesses are located. If broadly supported by the community and Council, some actions can be initiated while the planning process is underway.

#### ***COUNCIL AUTHORITY/PREVIOUS DECISIONS***

On July 8, 2010 Council resolved to establish a Mayor's West End Community Advisory Committee (WEMAC) as a Type D committee to provide advice to the Mayor and further to solicit community feedback on priorities.

On July 28, 2011 Council directed that community plans be prepared for three neighbourhoods - the West End, Grandview-Woodland and Marpole.

On October 20, 2011 after WEMAC tabled its report and recommendations, Council directed staff to review and report back on options for implementing the recommendations from the survey on community priorities as outlined in WEMAC's Interim Report, dated July 20, 2011.

#### ***CITY MANAGER'S/GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS***

The City Manager and the General Manager of Community Serviced recommend the adoption of recommendation 'A.'

#### ***REPORT***

##### ***Background/Context***

##### **Development Pressures in the West End**

Between 1991 and 2011, the West End has grown from 36,950 to 44,556 residents, an increase of about 20%. The development of high rise apartment buildings has primarily been on Alberni and West Georgia Streets and along Burrard Street. South of Robson Street and west of Burrard Street in the West End apartment zones there has been less development and only a modest number of high rise buildings built since 1990. The zoning of the apartment areas,

dating from 1989, has discouraged the demolition of rental apartment buildings, and because of this, almost all buildings built prior to 1989 remain intact.

More recently in 2007, Council adopted rate of change regulations applicable to the residentially apartment zoned areas to require the replacement of demolished rental units through redevelopment.

Since 2009, rezoning and development applications for new significant developments or changes of use have been received for the Beach Towers site, 1225 Harwood Street, 1030 Denman Street (Coast Plaza Hotel - change of use from hotel to rental housing) and at Davie and Bidwell Streets, and Comox and Broughton Streets. This reflects an increased interest in development in areas of the West End apartment zoned areas that have seen only modest change in the past 20 years.

In response to neighbourhood concerns about proposed developments, Council directed staff in the spring of 2010 to survey residents and businesses on West End Issues. Six top issues/concerns were identified by 600 citizens responding to the survey (see Table below).

#### West End Mayor's Advisory Committee (WEMAC)

As an interim measure, pending the initiation of a community planning process in the West End, Council appointed the West End Mayor's Advisory Committee in 2010. The Terms of Reference for the Committee called for it to be responsible for the following activities:

1. Develop and maintain a list of community priorities for the West End.
2. Meet with developers proposing re-zonings in the West End prior to community open houses to ensure these proposals are informed by current community priorities.
3. Provide advice to the Mayor's Office on further initiatives to increase linkages between the West End and the City in relation to development and policy.

In 2011, WEMAC conducted a survey of West End citizens. Based on this survey, WEMAC completed a report (available on-line at: <http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/planning/westend/>) putting forward 23 recommendations on seven themes - transportation, housing, neighbourhood design, livability, public space and facilities, commercial and retail characteristics and development process and policy.

The top five community concerns identified by those responding to the WEMAC survey are in the table below.

Table One

Top Community Concerns	
2010 Staff Survey	2011 WEMAC Survey
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Neighbourhood Character,</li> <li>• Parks and Green Space,</li> <li>• Housing,</li> <li>• Sustainability,</li> <li>• Crime and Safety, and</li> <li>• Transportation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing Affordability,</li> <li>• Renter Protection,</li> <li>• Neighbourhood Character,</li> <li>• Lack of Parking, and</li> <li>• Pedestrian Safety.</li> </ul>

A comparison of the top community concerns from the 2010 staff survey and the WEMAC survey show some similarities with housing and neighbourhood character identified as the most common concerns.

The following section provides a suggested approach to moving forward on the 23 WEMAC recommendations.

### *Strategic Analysis*

WEMAC's recommendations primarily focus on the West End and they are quite relevant to advancing community planning in the West End. They also provide advice on policy issues that apply to many neighbourhoods on topics of strategic importance in the West End and elsewhere in the City, pursued in:

- The City's Economic Action Strategy,
- The Housing and Homelessness Strategy,
- The Transportation Plan Update, and
- Initiatives for improvements and New Approaches to Public Engagement.

### Recommended Approach for Moving Forward on the WEMAC Recommendations

Staff conclude that the majority of WEMAC's recommendations (see Appendix 'A' for details on these 14 policies) be referred to the West End Community Planning initiative to be considered as part of policy development regarding the future of the neighbourhood. Almost all of the recommendations put forward by WEMAC and the issues identified in their survey are in alignment with the emerging community planning work in the West End.

Many of their recommendations bring forward ideas and approaches touching on several of the City's city-wide strategic priorities or are within the jurisdiction of the provincial government. Recommendations 1, 4, 7, 9, 11, 19, 22, and 23 (see Appendix 'A' - Column III for details) should be referred to the staff work groups or other level of government responsible for the relevant policy areas (affordable housing, transportation planning, economic development and public engagement and notification).

For two of the recommendations noted in the paragraph above, policy discussions in the West End can inform both community planning in the West End and the work of city-wide policy work regarding affordable housing and citizen engagement. This applies to Recommendations 7 and 23. (See Appendix 'A' - Columns II and III)

No further work is required on Recommendation 2, (an Active Transportation Policy Council has been established), and 8 and 15 (propose additional initiatives for WEMAC) because, due to the pending West End community planning initiative, WEMAC has not been reappointed.

### *Implications*

#### *Financial*

There are no financial implications until policy recommendations are presented to Council. In the interim, consideration of the recommendations will be undertaken by existing staff in the normal course of their work programmes, at no additional cost.

*CONCLUSION*

WEMAC have submitted a report with recommendations that bring forward new ideas and fresh thinking and are relevant to the City's strategic policy priorities. It is anticipated that they will be further developed as part of the West End community plan and other policy initiatives.

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## Analysis of WEMAC Recommendations

From the report, "WEMAC Community Priorities for the West End- Interim Report to Mayor Gregor Robertson: July 20, 2011"

COLUMN I WEMAC Recommendations		COLUMN II To be referred to the West End community planning process	COLUMN III To be considered as part of city-wide policy initiatives and processes and policy work by other jurisdictions (e.g. the Province)
<b>Transportation</b>			
1.	A West End Transportation Task Force be established with a mandate to make urgent recommendations on safety for pedestrians and develop recommendations regarding better access to transit. Considering the unique nature of the West End with respect to the transportation needs and exemplified by the contradictions between modes used versus issues cited in this survey (e.g. walking versus need for more parking), this advisory group should also act as a contributing body to the City of Vancouver Transportation Plan Update that is currently being undertaken.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If a task force is formed, the Transportation Plan team will meet with the group as requested. A number of transportation programs are also already available to address urgent needs that may be identified by the Task Force</li> </ul>
2.	WEMAC supports the establishment of a city-wide pedestrian advisory committee as requested of city staff by motion of Mayor Robertson on November 18, 2010.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In February 2012, Council established the Active Transportation Policy Council. Its mandate is to advise City Council on strategic priorities relating to walking, cycling and all other non-motorized modes of transportation modes in Vancouver. The ATPC will meet 5 times per year starting in April.</li> </ul>

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<b>Transportation</b>			
3.	Future development in the West End should reflect the transportation improvement priorities in the order they are reported in the table on page 14 ( <i>of the WEMAC Report</i> ).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Priorities to be tested as part of the community planning process</li> </ul>	
<b>Housing</b>			
4.	A West End Rental Advocacy Committee be established to develop a robust and sustainable plan for outreach to West End renters for the City of Vancouver. In light of the significant challenges in engaging renters, the committee would also address the many issues identified by this report thereby providing a reliable, cohesive voice for West End renters with other levels of government. This committee would serve as a liaison with other existing community-based rental groups and co-participate in bringing forward initiatives to address rental housing concerns.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff note that the Provincial government is primarily responsible for regulating residential tenancy. Much of this advocacy work would be focused on Provincial legislation and policies. Staff assume that this would be a community-based committee, rather than a City of Vancouver committee.</li> </ul>

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<b>Housing</b>			
5.	All new development consideration in the West End must have a priority for maintaining rental housing stock. At a minimum, the 80/20 renter/owner ratio should be maintained with priority given to projects that increase the ratio of renters in the West End.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To be further tested as part of the West End community planning process.</li> </ul>	
6.	In order to encourage affordability, a designated portion of the rents in new purpose built rental developments should be targeted towards the median income of the community. <i>(Note: Based on 2006 Census data, median income of the West End is \$38,500)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To be further tested as part of the West End community planning process.</li> </ul>	



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<b>Housing</b>		
7.	The City of Vancouver, leverage partnerships with other levels of government and examine all possible means to increase affordable housing options within the West End.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This can also be considered in the West End and other community planning processes.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To be considered as part of the implementation of the City's Housing and Homelessness Strategy</li> </ul>	8.	WEMAC meet with, and encourage all residents of the West End to meet with, local MLAs and MPs to advocate for their support and funding for a full spectrum of affordable housing options, using the survey data as evidence.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not applicable.</li> </ul>		

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<b>Housing</b>			
9.	Support the appointment of a community-based Rental Protection Advocate at the City of Vancouver with a city-wide mandate to support renters.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To be considered as part of the implementation of the City's Housing and Homelessness Strategy and in discussion with the Provincial Residential Tenancy Branch (the Provincial Agency with jurisdiction on this matter), noting that the Province is responsible for residential tenancy.</li> </ul>
10.	Future development in the West End should reflect the housing improvement priorities in the order they are reported in the table on page 18 ( <i>of the WEMAC Report</i> ).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Priorities to be tested as part of the community planning process.</li> </ul>	

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<b>Neighbourhood Design</b>			
11.	In consideration of a similar model already established for the community of Shaughnessy, when development applications in the West End are brought to the Urban Design Panel, the West End Community should have an equal representation of community members as voting panel members as the counterparts from the total representation of professional advisory members.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proposal should be reviewed by Assistant Director of Current Planning and the Public Engagement Manager, Communications Dept. for further consideration and possible inclusion in approaches to neighbourhood and reviews of Development/Rezoning Applications</li> </ul>
12.	Future development in the West End should reflect the neighbourhood design priorities in the order they are reported in the table on page 20 ( <i>of the WEMAC Report</i> ).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Priorities to be tested as part of the community planning process.</li> </ul>	

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<b>Livability</b>			
13.	<p>Future development in the West End should reflect the livability features in the order they are reported in the table on page 22 (<i>of the WEMAC Report</i>). <i>SPECIAL NOTE: Please see transportation section for other recommendations related to walkability. Additional recommendations related to self-contained community and work/opportunities are included in both the Community Facilities section and the Commercial/Retail opportunities section.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Priorities to be tested as part of the community planning process.</li> </ul>	

<p>COLUMN I WEMAC Recommendations</p>	<p>COLUMN II To be referred to the West End community planning process</p>	<p>COLUMN III To be considered as part of city-wide policy initiatives and processes and policy work by other jurisdictions (e.g. the Province)</p>	
<p><b>Public Spaces and Facilities</b></p>			
<p>14.</p>	<p>Prioritize the preservation of green, open and public space in the West End and that undertake the following activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City staff work with Park Board and community members to complete a green, open and public space asset map to identify immediate opportunities to increase green, open and public space</li> <li>• City staff conduct a study on repurposing laneways as green space, pedestrian thoroughfares, cycling infrastructure and other uses that emphasize West End resident priorities</li> <li>• Future development proposals be evaluated against the asset map and laneway study</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To be considered as part of the West End community planning process</li> </ul>	

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<b>Public Spaces and Facilities</b>		
15.	WEMAC meet with local MLAs and MPs regarding the need for investment in healthcare and hospital facilities within the West End.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not applicable</li> </ul>
16.	A community vision process be undertaken immediately to better understand the current use of and future planning for an updated/new West End Community Centre and Library.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Vancouver School Board, the Park Board and the Vancouver Library Board all have an interest in the future of this site</li> <li>• Staff will be in contact with these Boards and propose that the West End community planning process is an opportunity to consider the future of the site and the buildings and to involve the public in identifying community needs and priorities</li> </ul>

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<b>Public Spaces and Facilities</b>			
17.	Future development in the West End should reflect the public facilities improvement priorities in the order they are reported in the table on page 24 ( <i>of the WEMAC Report</i> ).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Priorities to be tested as part of the community planning process</li> </ul>	
<b>Commercial/Retail Characteristics</b>			
18.	Review the current commercial zoning bylaws to ensure they support an eclectic and diverse mix of business in the West End.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To be considered as part of the West End community planning process</li> </ul>	

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<b>Commercial/Retail Characteristics</b>			
19.	Continue to press the BC Assessment Authority and the provincial government to allow Vancouver to differentiate between small business and others in property tax policy.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting local business is an objective of the City's Economic Action Strategy</li> <li>• Finance staff will align this work with the Strategic Review of the City's Property Tax Policy as part of the City's Economic Development Plan.</li> </ul>
20.	Future development in the West End should reflect the commercial/retail features in the order they are reported in the table on page 26 ( <i>of the WEMAC Report</i> ).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Priorities to be tested as part of the community planning process</li> </ul>	



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<b>General</b>			
21.	Update and develop a Comprehensive Community Vision and Plan to reflect the updated needs and priorities of the West End Community. This is to be accomplished through the City of Vancouver Community Vision and planning processes. (See existing West End Residential Areas Policy Plan, 1987)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not applicable because the terms of reference for the West End community plan proposes a comprehensive plan rather than an up-date of the 1987 plan</li> </ul>	
<b>Development Process &amp; Policy</b>			
22.	The current two-block blanket rule for notification is insufficient and must be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. New tools need to be developed for notification beyond the “official” notification current received by residents. These may include leaflets,		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This can be considered by the Assistant Director of Planning and the City’s Public Engagement Manager, Communications Dept. who is reviewing the City’s approaches to communication and engagement and identifying options</li> </ul>

COLUMN I WEMAC Recommendations		COLUMN II To be referred to the West End community planning process	COLUMN III To be considered as part of city-wide policy initiatives and processes and policy work by other jurisdictions (e.g. the Province)
	posters, information posted in community library and community centre. Social media tools will be included in the hopes of increasing citizen engagement.		
23.	Community input to development proposals should come earlier in the Planning Department's decision-making process. The current process does not provide for community feedback until after plans have been developed. A revised process will improve the participation of the community and developers throughout the planning process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The plan will seek to establish clear policy directions for new development reflecting neighbourhood values and city-wide priorities to increase clarity and predictability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This can be considered by the Assistant Director of Planning and the City's Public Engagement Manager, Communications Dept. who is reviewing the City's approaches to communication and engagement and identifying options</li> </ul>