

James C. Johnstone

s.22(1) Personal and Confidential

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Attn: Mayor & Council

Re: Rezoning of 955 East Hastings for Mixed Use Development

I have lived in Strathcona for the past 12 years and for the past three years (until October 3, 2012) I served as Chair of the Strathcona Residents' Association.

In general, I support the proposed rezoning and development application of 955 East Hastings, but this support is conditional. I strongly feel that certain changes should, can, and must be made to the project to make it a better fit for our diverse East End neighbourhood and meet the needs of our community, in particular the needs of low income East Enders living in close proximity to the project.

It is extremely important to remember that this development is being built at Hastings and Campbell, not Hastings and Main. Our concern in this neighbourhood is how this development will impact or could benefit struggling low income families with children, not those living in SROs.

In order for the 70 units of social housing currently planned for this project to be considered a "community amenity" at all, **some sort of priority must be given to low income families currently residing in the immediate vicinity, in particular Stamp's Place Housing**, so they can move into this new development. In order for the social housing to be a true community asset, it must be designed for, serve, and be set aside for low income people living at Stamp's Place, otherwise, these 70 units will only serve to bring in people that will overburden an already overtaxed RayCam Cooperative Centre, its immediate neighbour to the south.

At the recent public forum on the development at the Russian Hall I was impressed by the fact that both those people who were against and for the project decried the fact that the social housing was a segregated section of the development with its

own separate entrance. Therefore, I strongly feel that **it would serve our community better if those social housing units were integrated in with the market housing, and contribute to community building, rather than maintaining uneasy separate solitudes.**

There is an urgent need for accessible and community oriented retail space in the project. For years people in Strathcona have been advocating for the revitalization of our historic commercial strip along Hastings Street. **What is most needed is an affordable grocery store or food co-op in the project.**

Some provision must be made that this development, both in its demolition and construction stages, provides job training and employment for unemployed and underemployed people in the immediate neighbourhood.

These changes and inclusions in the plan would vastly improve the project and the level of support it would get in the community. Let's plan based on best practice. Let us design in a way that acknowledges, respects and includes this project's neighbours.

Twenty percent social housing meets the city minimum requirements for a project like this. Let's not think in terms of just meeting minimum requirements, but how we can integrate these 70 units of housing in a way that truly enhances, enriches and adds dignity and provides opportunities to the families who will live in them. When we know we can do better, why not commit to doing it? A tweaked 995 East Hastings could be an amazing legacy, a model for what an amazing diverse and balanced housing community could look like. It is not too late to make these changes. To move forward with the plan as it is would be squandered opportunity. Please, let's do not only the right thing, but the best thing possible. We can do better.

Sincerely,

James C. Johnstone
Strathcona