

Hildebrandt, Tina

From: Correspondence Group, City Clerk's Office
Sent: Tuesday, February 24, 2015 5:00 PM
To: Public Hearing
Subject: FW: 450 Gore - Public Hearing, February 24, 2015

From: Megan Lau [s. 22(1) Personal and Confidential]
Sent: Tuesday, February 24, 2015 4:45 PM
To: Correspondence Group, City Clerk's Office
Subject: Re: 450 Gore - Public Hearing, February 24, 2015

Mayor and council,

My name is **Megan Lau**. I am writing to **oppose the rezoning application at 450 Gore** (from RT-3 (Two-Family Dwelling) District to CD-1 (Comprehensive Development) District).

I submit my comments today as a concerned citizen, and not as a planning or real-estate expert. My office is located just a block away from 450 Gore; every day I pass by this empty lot. I know it's an eye sore and is currently doing no favours for the community. At best, it is a resort for urban pigeons.

Certainly, our city needs housing and there are a shortage of rental units. Your constituents have asked for more developments so that they can have a place to call home near the downtown core.

This is all to say that in many ways the proposed development at 450 Gore ostensibly addresses some of the city's current needs. However, this project and the related rezoning will also have significant and negative impacts on the Downtown Eastside and Chinatown. The proposed project speaks a different architectural and visual language than its neighbours across Gore Street, and though it conforms to the bureaucratic definition of *affordable*, it is not that for many, many Vancouverites.

For the past several years, Chinatown and Strathcona have been havens for young, creative people to live and work affordably — the work that has emerged from this community puts Vancouver on the maps, and generally makes our lives richer. For many decades, it has also been a low-income neighbourhood where families have lived for generations and built a community in the truest sense of the word.

As of today, I know that these neighbourhoods are no longer affordable and becoming less so everyday. The rental rates for some of the neighbouring co-op housing units are rising.

The proposed development at 450 Gore will only serve to drive rents up further. I am a professional in my late 20s with hopes of being able to live and stay in Vancouver, but I cannot afford a micro-dwelling at \$800/month; moreover, I do not believe that this is anyone's first or second or third choice of housing. These are not homes where people can build lives and grow and stay for a long time. Even with all practical considerations, are these the best homes we can offer Vancouverites?

Beyond the housing factor, there is the question of social impact. I have learned that the Chinatown Historic Area Planning Committee was consulted about this project, despite the fact that Chinatown's community extends beyond Gore Street. As you know, low-income seniors housing, temples, and benevolent society buildings and other community services bleed into Strathcona. The proposed development at 450 Gore would have a negative impact on the Chinatown and neighbouring Chinese community.

How we might revitalize Chinatown, increase density, honour the neighbourhoods history, and preserve the spirit of this neighbourhood is an open question, and one I hope we can answer together. One only has to do a quick scan of an online comments on an article about Vancouver's Chinatown to know that residents are divided about how to balance progress and development with more intangible social concerns.

Still, with what little I know, I see little in this proposal that contributes net social benefit to either the Strathcona or Chinatown neighbourhood.

I'll conclude with some thoughts about the meaning of Chinatown to me: I am a first-generation Canadian who grew up in Vancouver. Growing up, my family shopped in Chinatown at least once a week, and my grandmother who lived in Kerrisdale commuted to Chinatown weekly to buy groceries. In her later years, we still took her to Chinatown to see her doctor and buy meat and fish, even when Richmond could be more convenient. In my adult life, I have worked in several offices in Chinatown, and I volunteered as a project manager for the Chinatown Night Market revitalization in 2013. This neighbourhood is a part of my story and as a Chinese Canadian, I think of Chinatown as the only space that represents "where I come from"; I want us to take care and make sure that Chinatown lives on.

Mayor and Councillors, a more appropriate development can be built in 450 Gore, one that serves Chinatown, our artists, our young people, and our city better.

Thank you for your consideration -

Megan Lau