

# The Eight Point Solution to the Downtown Eastside Housing Crisis

From the Carnegie Community Action Project (CCAP)

The Carnegie Community Action Project urges City Council to adopt the following positions to stop the suffering of homeless and poorly housed residents:

## **1. Follow Council's own policy as outlined in the approved Homeless Action Plan and the Downtown Eastside Housing Plan:**

- Build 800 units per year of affordable housing, including but not limited to supportive housing
- Purchase at least one SRA hotel per year. With this commitment, the city needs to purchase 3 hotels now, one for 2005, 2006, and 2007.
- In the long term, replace SRAs with low-income social housing on a 1-for-1 basis

## **2. Fund housing with the City of Vancouver's Property Endowment Fund**

- In numerous polls, citizens have stated that they would fund the development of affordable housing and provide permanent solutions to homelessness – Give them a chance to do it!
- An investment in affordable housing is an investment in the same way as a road, a library, or a community centre. It creates a community asset and ultimately benefits the entire city.

## **3. Strengthen the Single Room Accommodation Bylaw**

- The housing provided by Single Room Accommodation hotels are the last line of housing before homelessness.
  - a. Pursue a replacement policy for SRA units:* The current average market price for a SRA hotel is nearly \$35,000 per room with new construction costs at nearly \$200,000 a room. Both the current \$5,000 conversion fee and the proposed conversion fee of \$15,000 thus drastically understate the economic value of a hotel as well as its replacement value. The City of Vancouver should do what the City of San Francisco has done for over 27 years by making developers responsible for replacing SRA rooms at *full market cost* (and not the taxpayer subsidized rate).
  - b. Discourage SRA conversions to backpacker hotels or student housing:* The minimum 80 square foot per bed rule should be increased to 100 square feet which will discourage SRO conversions to backpacker hotels.
  - c. Create a special SRA spot zoning classification:* Rampant speculation for real estate in the Downtown Eastside is destroying any chance a community-based developer can purchase and develop a community asset. A special SRA zoning would stabilize SRA prices and recognize the low-income friendly nature and

heritage of the Downtown Eastside and its role in housing low-income individuals in Vancouver.

**4. Don't use the Civil City project to prevent people who are poor and homeless from doing what they have to do survive.**

**5. Stop subsidizing developers who are gentrifying the Downtown Eastside through the Heritage Incentive Program (HIP)**

- Wealthy real estate developers should not receive public subsidies from the City. The Heritage Incentive Program provides free density for developers who make millions on their developments in the area, but do not develop a single unit of affordable housing. The HIP should be used instead used as means of encouraging the development of affordable housing units.

**6. Create a special Downtown Eastside Development Levy and Vacant Building Tax which goes into reinvesting in the neighborhood**

- The Downtown Eastside is historically low-income neighborhood. Any market development that brings individuals with significantly higher incomes should be charged an extra development fee and this money should be used to develop low-income housing in the neighborhood.

- Certain buildings in the Downtown Eastside are purposely left vacant by speculators. Certain property owners keep their buildings empty to more easily flip their properties as well as poorly maintain their properties. A Vacant Building Tax would discourage this practice.

**7. Lobby fiercely for senior government housing funds, at least a 50% increase in welfare rates, and an end to welfare rules that keep people in need from accessing welfare.**

**8. Enforce section 23 of the Standards of Maintenance Bylaw by having the city do maintenance work that landlords refuse.** A pilot project is not enough.

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