



DUNBAR

from the Dunbar Residents Association, Box 172, 3456 Dunbar St., V6S 2C2
604-222-9824 www.dunbar-vancouver.org

Democracy in Action



Last July, City Council appointed Thomas Berger Q.C. to head a Commission that will ask citizens for advice on how the City can bring democracy down to the neighbourhood level in Vancouver.

The first reform under consideration is to change the way we elect our city representatives, moving from the current "at-large" system to a "ward" system in which each district of the city would choose its own representatives to Council and Parks Board. How many wards would there be? Where would the boundaries be drawn? How many positions would be elected from each ward? Would it apply to Parks Board as well as Council? If we elected representatives to the GVRD, how would this work?

But electoral reform is not the only item on the Commission's agenda. Mr. Berger has also been asked to seek advice from citizens on other measures that the City might take to "enhance civic democracy" in Vancouver.

Here in Dunbar, we enjoy a higher level of citizen involvement in civic affairs than many other neighbourhoods. Neighbourhood-led initiatives like this newsletter and the November 24th Town Hall Meeting are possible because Dunbar has an active and dedicated neighbourhood association. Would it help if the City encouraged citizens to organize neighbourhood associations like the DRA in their neighbourhoods? What should be the roles and responsibilities of these associations? How can they be effective partners in the city's work?

We have invited Commissioner Berger to attend the meeting to observe our discussions. Dunbar's annual Town Hall meetings are local democracy in action.

Renew your membership in the DRA and be part of this interesting and important discussion (see membership details on the back cover).

Town Hall Meeting on Wards and Neighbourhood Involvement &

DRA Annual General Meeting

Monday, November 24, 2003

Doors open at 7:00 pm

Meeting starts at 7:30 pm sharp!

St. Philip's Church Hall
3737 West 27th Avenue

INSIDE:

*October 23 hearing on commercial zoning
– do we want higher buildings?*

- Good Neighbour Pledges – *can the DRA help?*
- People – *Local senior brings back silver and gold*

VISIT THE DRA WEB SITE AT:
www.dunbar-vancouver.org

*There are computer terminals at the Dunbar Branch
Library where you can access the Internet*



What is the Dunbar Residents Association?

This newsletter is produced 3 – 4 times each year by the Dunbar Residents' Association. The DRA is a provincially incorporated Non-Profit Society. Our purpose is “to preserve, strengthen and enhance the unique character and heritage of Dunbar”. The DRA has provided a forum for the concerns of the community since 1989. The DRA is also a founding member of Neighbour-to-Neighbour, a networking organization for neighbourhood associations in Vancouver.

In addition to this newsletter and our annual Town Hall Meeting, the DRA is working on other projects. We are publishing a richly illustrated citizens' history of our neighbourhood based on archival research by volunteers and taped interviews with many long-time citizens. The DRA is also a founding member of Dunbar's spring festival (called “Salmonberry Days”) celebrating the natural history of our neighbourhood with guided walks and talks.

Your membership in the DRA makes our community stronger.

Your DRA Newsletter Volunteers:

Editor: Helen Spiegelman

Layout: Margo Mactaggart

Proofreading and Distribution: Sonia Wicken

Pumpkin Festival Postponed till 2004

Anyone interested in helping organize it?
Contact the DRA at 604 / 222-9824

Salmonberry Days seeds bear fruit



These Dunbar pumpkins were raised jointly by Marjorie Schurman and house-exchange partner, Michael, who kept the garden watered this summer and passed along a tip on pumpkin husbandry: pick the male flowers (the ones with the stamen and powdery pollen) and directly transfer pollen into female flowers (the ones with the pistil which is slightly sticky). And then watch YOUR pumpkins grow

Meet the nominees for the DRA Board of Directors:

Each year the DRA elects a new Board of Directors at its AGM in November. The DRA bylaws state that the number of directors shall be *a minimum of 5 and a maximum of 15* and that directors must be members in good standing of the DRA. **If you have an interest in serving on the DRA Board, contact Jon Ellis at 604/681-9969.**

Current Directors:

Peggy Schofield: shop-keeper (Past-President, ex-officio member of the Board, coordinator of Dunbar's history project)

Jon Ellis: planner (DRA President)

George Pinch: retired BC Hydro engineer

Helen Spiegelman: environmentalist (DRA Secretary, newsletter editor, Salmonberry Days Coordinator)

Sonia Wicken: housewife (DRA Treasurer, newsletter distribution coordinator)

NEW NOMINEES:

Mike Andruff: realtor

Bob Ross: engineer

Walter Wells: realtor

THANKS to retiring directors **Jonathan Baker, Peter Kendall and Don Marquardt**, who stepped down this year.



Congratulations Waldo!

Ewald (Waldo) Wuschke was awarded a Gold and a Silver Medal for 5-Pin Bowling at the B.C. Seniors Games held in Chilliwack September 3-6, 2003. There were approximately 3,000 participants from all areas of British Columbia at the games. The Gold Medal was for the highest points above average after six games and the Silver was for the highest points above average in a single game.



Ewald was a member of a team selected in playoffs at Varsity Ridge Bowling at 15th Avenue and Arbutus Street.

At left: Dunbar's local BC Champ proudly shows his medals!

Crash at Lord Kitchener:



On a beautiful Sunday morning in late August, residents witnessed this unlikely scene on the Lord Kitchener School playing field when an eastbound TransLink bus narrowly avoided a collision with a westbound vehicle turning left onto Blenheim Street. Fortunately, the school playing field and crosswalks were unoccupied at the time. Photo courtesy of the Blenheim Neighbourhood Group.



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Public Hearing:

A public hearing is scheduled for **October 23, 2003**, at 7:30 pm in Council Chambers to consider proposed changes to the **C-2 District Schedule and Guidelines** of the Zoning and Development By-law.

The recommended changes include:

- **increasing the maximum height** of a building from the existing 40 feet to 45 feet ;
- **requiring larger rear setbacks** at each level;
- **requiring front setbacks** at street level and on the fourth story;
- **reducing the total allowable density** from 3.0 to 0.75 FSR without relaxation (FSR is calculated as the floor space divided by the lot area.).

As in the current regulation, **commercial use will be required** at the front at street level, **residential will be allowed at the rear** on the street level as well as at the top three levels and the **regulations may be relaxed by the Director of Planning** within the intent of established Guidelines.

Read the report at:

<http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/ctyclerk/cclerk/20030909/p1.htm>

Learn about the Public Hearings process at: <http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/ctyclerk/councilmeetings/publichearing.htm>

Learn about how to register and how to present to Council at: <http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/ctyclerk/councilmeetings/howtopresent.htm>.

(There are Internet terminals at the Dunbar Branch Library where you can view this information.)

The DRA responds:

In 1989 the City changed the regulations for the C-2 Commercial District zoning, a long-standing zoning covering most of Vancouver's commercial areas outside the downtown core. Responding to a regional imperative to create additional housing in the city, the by-law amendments effectively changed C-2 from a high density *commercial* district into a high density *residential* district (a.k.a. "mixed use"). This also fits the city's current planning objective of creating vibrant "neighbourhood centres" for local shopping.

The prospect of creating lucrative residential developments, especially on Vancouver's west side, unleashed a flood of development activity in districts that had been largely quiet for decades.

In 1998 the DRA complained to City Council that this new activity was having unforeseen and negative impacts both on Dunbar commercial areas and on their immediate neighbours.

"Buildings were being approved that were far too big, looming over previously secluded back yards."

Buildings were being approved that were far too big, looming over previously secluded back yards. Furthermore, affordable retail space was being demolished and replaced with stores that no-one could afford to rent, so new storefronts were standing empty. Many of the new buildings were also ugly, despite "design review" by the Director of Planning.

The DRA wrote to Council and asked for some specific changes to the C-2 regulations that we thought would work in Dunbar. (We did not presume to speak for other neighbourhoods who might well have different views and want to present them to Council.) Specifically, we asked that *in Dunbar only*: building height be limited to three storeys (no relaxations for "good design") both retail and residential uses be permitted on the ground floor design review by the Director of Planning cease (since it wasn't working anyway). Council instructed staff to undertake a review of C-2 regulations. The review continued for five years. On March 24, 2003, the proposed changes were presented to interested parties at an information session which was attended by DRA President Jon Ellis. He found that the proposed changes were not satisfactory to any of the interested parties – neither to the C-2 property owners and the development industry, nor to neighbours.



The DRA was disappointed because the proposed changes *increase the height* rather than reducing it and because the amendments do not address the problem of *vacant commercial units* in new developments. On the other hand, C-2 owners and developers were disappointed because of the *reduced FSR* (the amount of salable floor space that they can build on a site). The staff report acknowledged the dissatisfaction, commenting that the two groups' views are "inherently different."

Rather than seek a way to reconcile the differences, the staff report proposed a "middle ground" which fails to serve the needs of either group. No-one is happy – as Council will probably learn at the hearing on October 23rd.

But what of the DRA's suggestion that different neighbourhoods might have different zoning rules? The report says the following:

"The suggestion has been made that the City should revise C-2 zoning in only some neighbourhoods, or change it more radically in some neighbourhoods than others. This idea seems to come from the fact that some communities have been more vocal about their concerns in the media."

The report goes on to say something very telling about the way the city looks at neighbourhoods: "objectively viewed, the impacts of C-2 development are the same on all the adjacent RS and RT zoned properties citywide."

But are all C-2 development impacts the same? The report acknowledges a whole range of different circumstances that exist within C-2 zones that require special consideration during permit approvals. For instance sites that have no back lane, sites on corners, and sites on slopes. In these circumstances the Director of Planning uses discretion and consults the Guidelines to manage these atypical sites in a way that is intended to avoid potential negative impacts on neighbours.

But just as the physical setting makes a difference in a development approval process, so does the human setting. The views and interests of the people who live and work where a new development is proposed should be taken into account during the development approval process.

The DRA believes that the "objective viewpoint" of city planners is distorting their perception. Objectivity becomes a lens that makes us all look the same. What is needed is a process that brings the permit approval process down to the neighbourhood, so that the neighbourhood's interests and the developer's interests are

integrated into the project design early in the approval process. This will save time and money for the developers and result in more successful developments. Seething resentment over new developments is bad for business as well as bad for communities.

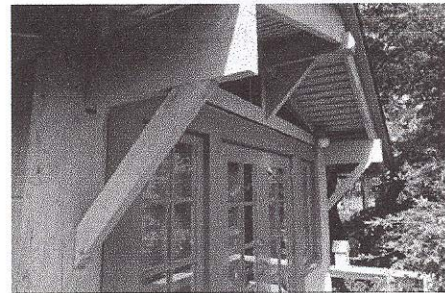
DRA Recommendations:

(A) Limit the permitted height by amending the proposed section 4.3.1(c) to read: "..., shall not exceed 12.2 m (40 ft.)."

(B) Limit the discretionary approval stream by amending the proposed section 4.7.1 as follows: "4.7.1. The floor space ratio shall not exceed 2.5, except ...", and remove section 4.7.1(a) and renumber as required.

(C) Recognize the importance of public consultation by amending the proposed sections 4.3.2, 4.4.2, 4.5.1(b)(ii), 4.6.2, and 4.10.4 to include the following: "..., provided the Director of Planning first considers the intent of this Schedule, all applicable policies and guidelines adopted by Council, and any advice from individuals or groups after consultations satisfactory to the neighbourhood."

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Good Neighbour Pledge

*(The following is excerpted from a letter from DRA President **Jon Ellis** to interested parties involved in the “Good Neighbour Pledges” signed by St. George’s School and Immaculate Conception Parish. The DRA is now meeting with representatives of the schools and the surrounding communities to discuss this proposal.)*

Recently the DRA Board was approached by residents who were closely involved with the development approval processes at Immaculate Conception Parish and St. George’s School. Both developments were *conditional institutional uses* in a single-family zone. Both approval processes were highly controversial.

The Planning Department approved these proposals with the condition that each applicant sign a “Good Neighbour Agreement” as a way of managing future concerns that might arise. Before finalization the “Agreements” were downgraded to “Pledges”.

The residents who met with us made us aware of three shortcomings that are making the Pledges difficult to implement successfully. First, there is no provision for a neutral third party who will facilitate the Pledge committees. The City could have played this role but made a decision not to do so. Second, there is no provision in either Pledge that defines what “the community” is. Effectively, there is no-one to whom the “pledge” is given. Third, members of the community are concerned that they may face financial costs for mediation of disputes with the

The residents who met with us made us aware of three shortcomings that are making the Pledges difficult to implement successfully.

schools arising from the developments.

The DRA proposes that the Good Neighbour Pledges for Immaculate Conception Parish and St. George’s School be amended by appointing the Dunbar Residents’ Association as the *facilitator of dialogue* and as the *guarantor of community involvement* within the context of these pledges.

In these roles the DRA would undertake the duties of a *non-voting secretary and chair*:

- ensure that meetings are held regularly, consistent with the Pledge;
- ensure that meeting notices and agendas are distributed in a time and manner acceptable to the members of the Pledge Committees;
- ensure that materials and equipment needed to run the meetings are available;
- ensure that meeting minutes are recorded and distributed in a time and manner acceptable to the members of the Pledge Committees;
- ensure that committee discussions are focused on the agreed agenda; and
- encourage open communication and consensus and alleviate wasteful conflict.

The DRA would like to undertake this responsibility as a pilot project. If the experiment is successful, and if the City chooses to use Good Neighbour Pledges in future developments, we recommend that future Good Neighbour Pledges incorporate a local neighbourhood society in these roles.



Campus Pay Parking unused.....



UBC Development Affects Dunbar

You've probably seen the ads in the real estate section for the new tower residences on the UBC Campus. The Board of Governors gave the nod this month to the next phase of the development that will see a town the size of White Rock on the tip of Point Grey Peninsula in Dunbar's back yard.

Students will commute one way, while the good people of "University Towne" commute the other.

Meanwhile, this year UBC delivered on its promise to chip in on free bus passes for undergraduates. Here's how a resident of South Dunbar describes the results:

UBC's new bus pass system seemed like a great idea; we looked forward to a reduction in rush hour traffic on West 41st. There is one outcome we didn't foresee, however. Parking in front of our own homes on weekdays has become a major challenge. The residential streets near the Dunbar Loop (Dunbar and 41st) are being used as a free Park and Ride facility by students who are likely commuting from the suburbs, and travelling only the last few kilometers to UBC by bus! In their haste to get to classes, they park close to corners and, at times, obstruct drive-ways. Will we now need to lobby for "Residents Only" parking on our streets?



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Sonia's Notes

What a long and glorious summer we have had! Fall is now in the air and it is good to see the grass turning green after some rain. The leaves are starting to turn color and fall, which means **clogged drains** on many corners. Please help us pedestrians and bicyclists by raking the gutters, especially on the corners.

We were very proud to learn that three Dunbar residents were honoured earlier this year with the Commemorative Medal for the Queen's Golden Jubilee. Congratulations to **Stephen Sothy** and **Gail Sparrow**, who along with **Terry Slack** were recognized as Canadians who have made a significant contribution to their fellow citizens, their community or Canada. Congratulations!

It was another busy season at the Dunbar Community Centre. Congratulations on a successful sports boot drive over the summer. A few boxes of useable boots were collected and donated to the Ray Cam Co-operative Centre. What an excellent example of recycling. **Saturday, November 22 (10am - 4pm)** is the date for their most successful Craft Fair. Admission is \$2 (under 12 free).

Point Grey Secondary School (West 37th and West Boulevard) will hold it's annual Christmas Craft Fair, with book sale and tea room, on **Saturday November 14th (10am-4pm)**

The churches in the neighbourhood are also having their annual fall events. The Immaculate Conception (3776 W 28th) Rummage Sale is **Saturday October 25 (11am – 2pm)**. Their Christmas Fair is **Sunday November 30**. Call the school for further details: 604 224-5012.

Dunbar Heights United Church (Collingwood and 24th) is holding its Fall Fair on **Saturday October 25 (10am - 4pm)**. There will be crafts, books, silent auction, entertainment, food & "Fun for Everyone".

St. Philip's (3737 W 27th) is holding its Christmas Fair on **Saturday November 15 (12:30 - 3pm)**

I will close this column by reminding everyone that it is time to renew your membership. The association year end is September 30. Every membership is appreciated and helps your board to present a strong voice at city hall.



DRA Membership Form 2003-2004 (September to September)

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**At the AGM-November 24th, 7:00 p.m.
St. Philip's Church Hall, 3737 West 27th Ave.**