

# Nothing About Us Without Us

Interim Report on Community Visioning



By Wendy Pedersen and Jean Swanson

Produced by the Carnegie Community Action Project  
with assistance from the Low Income Land Use and Housing Coalition

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Interim report on community visioning by the Carnegie Community Action Project (CCAP)  
with help from the Low Income Land Use and Housing Coalition (LILAHC)

By Wendy Pedersen and Jean Swanson

CCAP acknowledges and honours  
the fact that our community lies within the Traditional Territory of the Coast Salish people.

\*Thanks to the Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users for allowing us to use their motto  
as the title of this report.

## **Acknowledgements**

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## Summary

Between August 2007 and April 2008 the Carnegie Community Action Project (CCAP) conducted 15 visioning sessions with almost 300 Downtown Eastside (DTES) residents. In March and April, CCAP had 655 residents fill out a one page questionnaire about the community. The number of people CCAP met with in both stages is far higher than in most public input processes.



Some of the visionaries at The Learning Centre.

The results of the vision sessions and questionnaire show that the overwhelming majority of low-income residents agree that the DTES is a real community where people know each other and feel comfortable and at home. Ninety-five percent said they would like to continue to live in the DTES if they had safe, secure housing. There is also overwhelming agreement about what residents want and need: affordable housing, better incomes and services, mostly health services. Most current residents do not want the area to become dominated by condos and many fear that they will be pushed out with nowhere to go.

## Context

The Downtown Eastside (DTES) is not simply “four blocks of hell,” “bedbugs, slumlords, and drug dealers,” “skid row,” or any of numerous other slanderous epithets thrown at the neighbourhood. It is a community where people say “hi” on the street, where residents feel comfortable and familiar, have a chance of getting the help they need, volunteer, create and help each other and struggle to survive in spite of deep poverty, terrible or no housing, and often mental and physical illness.

DTES residents have struggled for everything their community has: CRAB Park, Oppenheimer Park, trees on the street, the Carnegie Community Centre, Insite and harm reduction policies, a women’s shelter and the 5000 units of social housing that the neighbourhood has.

Another struggle for the survival of the community is taking place now, as developers move east, snatching up land for condos and speculating with residential hotels that are the homes of thousands of DTES residents. At the May 1, 2008 City Council meeting the Director of the City’s Housing Centre, Cameron Gray, said that condo development in the Downtown Eastside was like a “hurricane” and going faster than the Downtown Eastside

Housing Plan had predicted. He said neighbourhood change was being driven by condo development. With condo development outstripping social housing production 3 to 1 in the 2005 to 2010 period (see tables from Housing Centre), the DTES could soon become dominated by condo owners and the amenities

**New social housing for singles (2005-10), Vancouver Housing Centre**

Project	Units	Est. Completion	City Land
Smith-Yuen Apartments - 475 E. Hastings	52	2007	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
65 E. Hastings	92	2008	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Union Gospel Mission - 601 E. Hastings	37	2008	
Woodward's singles - 101 W. Hastings	125	2009	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
980 Main St.	80	2009	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
337 W. Pender	103	2010	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
590 Alexander	100	2010	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
606 Powell	100	2010	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>Lost units (Maria Gomez)</i>	-80		
<b>Net gain in non-market singles units</b>	<b>557</b>		

**New market housing construction (2005-10), Vancouver Housing Centre**

Project	Units	Tenure	Est. Compl'n	Status
Left Bank - 919 Station	59	condo	2005	compl.
33 Water	58	rental	2005	compl.
Koret Lofts - 45 E Cordova	118	condo	2006	compl.
Bowman Lofts - 528 Beatty	38	condo	2006	compl.
Creekside - 125 Milross	165	condo	2007	compl.
9 W. Pender	11	rental	2007	compl.
Empress Hotel	10	rental	2007	compl.
Terminus - 36 Water	46	condo	2008	u/c
Crane Bldg - 540 Beatty	57	condo	2008	u/c
Paris Block - 53 W. Hastings	29	condo	2008	u/c
33 - 33 W. Pender	63	condo	2008	u/c
East - 71 E. Pender	22	condo	2008	u/c
Smart - 168 Powell	90	condo	2008	u/c
Garage - 12 Water	34	condo	2009	u/c
Ginger - 718 Main	78	condo	2009	u/c
Woodward's - 101 W. Hastings	536	condo	2009	u/c
Boulder Hotel - 265 Carrall	21	condo	2010	approved
Macdonald Building - 40 Powell	32	rental	2010	approved
221 Union	130	condo	2010	review
<b>New market units</b>	<b>1,597</b>			

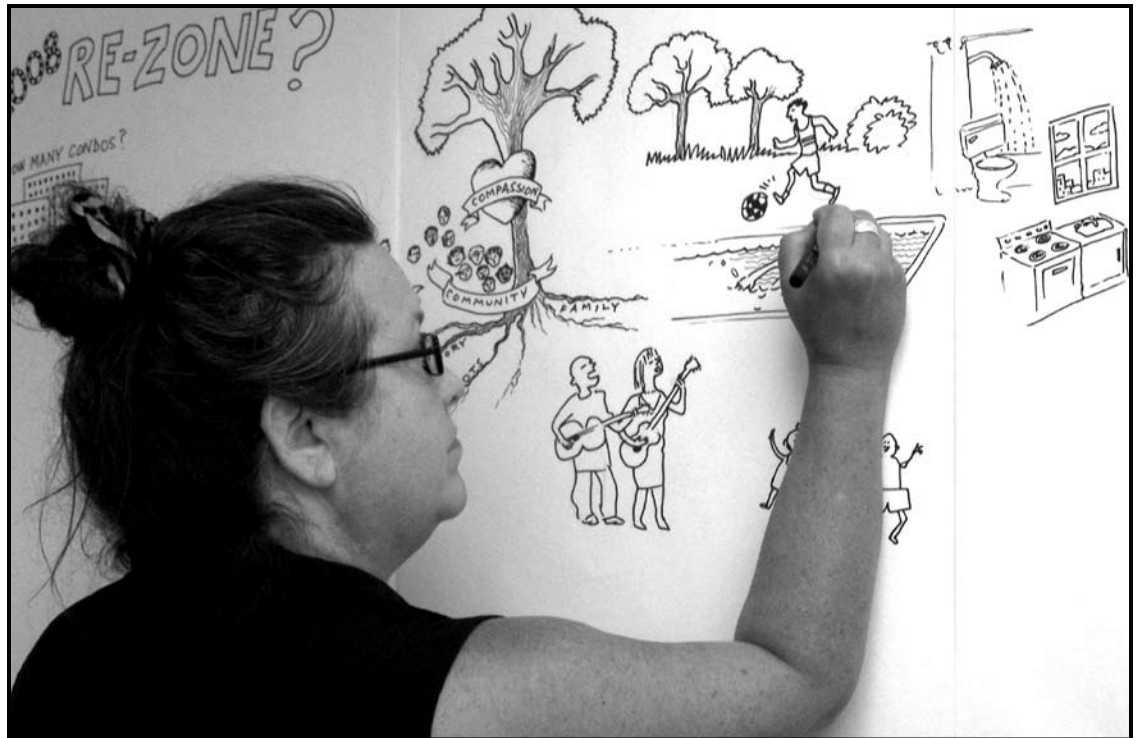
and services they prefer. Market forces could drive out existing residents who have no affordable housing to move to and no community where they feel as comfortable and have as many supports as they do in the DTES.

For years the City has promised “Revitalization

without displacement” for the DTES. But, because governments refuse to build enough necessary housing in the DTES, the so-called revitalization is threatening to displace thousands of DTES residents, especially the ones who live in privately owned hotels or are homeless.

It is common for decisions to be made without any regard to, or on behalf of low-income people, not by them. That’s why CCAP adopted the Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users’ (VANDU) motto for the title of this report: “Nothing about us without us.” We don’t want decisions about development, housing, services, income, and land use made without participation by the low-income people

who live here and call it their community. But it’s hard for people who often struggle each day just to find a place to sleep and food to eat to be part of a political process that threatens to obliterate their neighbourhood. While richer people have more skills, resources and mobility to get together and work for what they want in the area, low-income people do not. So CCAP started this visioning process to find out what the low-income people in the DTES want. This is a report on the first two steps of the visioning process, 15 visioning workshops at 12 different community hubs, involving 295 people, and a questionnaire filled out by 655 people in the neighbourhood.



During the visioning sessions, Diane Wood drew pictures of what participants were saying while they spoke.

## Visioning sessions

The visioning sessions were done between August, 2007 and April, 2008 by CCAP researcher Wendy Pedersen and a note-taker, plus local artist Diane Wood who drew pictures of what participants were saying while they spoke.

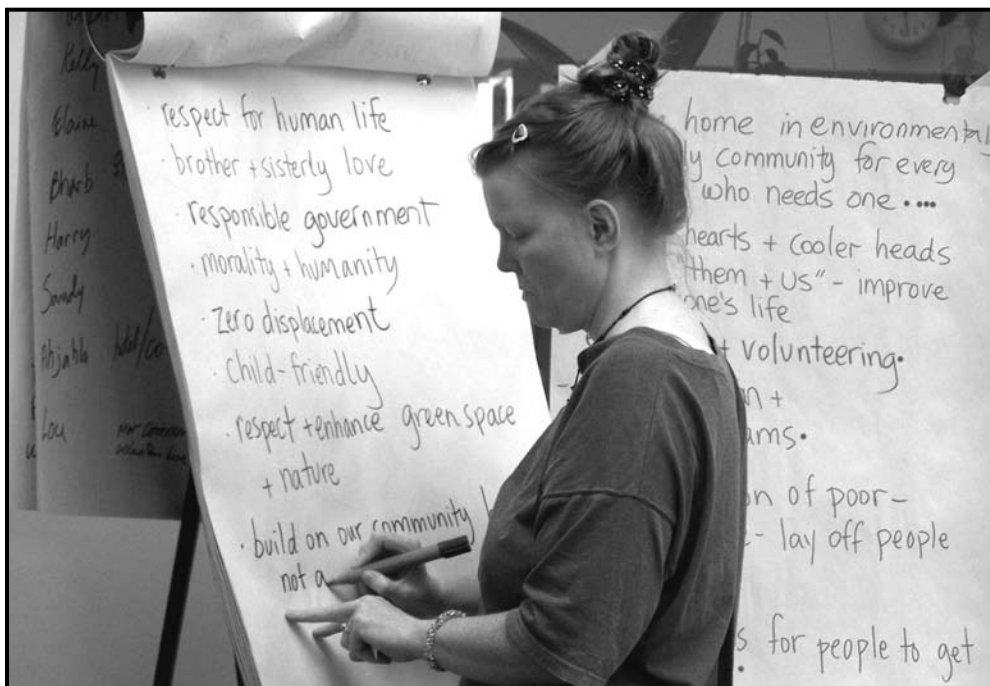
## Who we spoke to

Most people at the visioning sessions lived in social housing, SROs, on the streets, in shelters and a few in apartments and houses. Of the folks

who told us what kind of housing they lived in, 34% lived in social housing, 35% in SROs, 22% were homeless or lived in shelters, 8% rented and 1% said they owned their homes. Group sizes ranged from 2 to 40.

The sessions were held with people at:

- Aboriginal Front Door - adult education, arts and crafts, healing circles;
- Bridge Housing Society for Women - supportive housing;
- The Carnegie Community Centre;
- The Carnegie Learning Centre - Success Skills for Community Work group;



Notes taken word for word during the visioning sessions.

section, participants were asked their first name, what kind of housing they lived in, and one thing they liked about the DTES. All answers were written on a flip chart. For the second section, each person was asked, "What is one strength of the DTES?" After answers were written on a flip chart, people were given two stickers and asked to put a sticker beside the answers that they agreed with the

- DTES Neighbourhood House;
- Downtown Eastside Women's Centre – Power of Women group;
- First United Church – advocacy, clothing, sleeping in pews;
- The Ford Building - social housing for working poor, people on welfare and low incomes;
- Lifeskills Centre - showers, laundry, drop in;
- Lore Krill Co-op - mixed income social housing;
- Native Housing Society, J. C. Leman - social housing;
- Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users (VANDU) - peer support, education, harm reduction;
- Vancouver Second Mile Society - Chinese seniors drop in centre;
- WISH Drop In Centre Society - programs for female survival sex workers; and, VANDU Women's Group.

most. For the third section people were asked, "What is one thing that would improve your life in the DTES?" After all had spoken, they were given three stickers to put on the three things they thought would most improve their lives.

### 1) What do you like about the DTES?

Four major themes emerged when people were asked to name one thing they liked about the

### What people said: 1,2,3

Most sessions had three sections. For the first

**"Here people stick up for each other and take care of each other."**



Carnegie visioning session.

## "I like being me and being known."

DTES: the people, the community, the services and the non-judgmental nature of the area.

### (a) The people

"I wouldn't connect with the people on Broadway and Granville," said one woman. "They walk right by you there....Here people stick up for each other and care for each other. It's not going to feel safe if the neighbourhood is taken over." "People are welcoming," said one resident. "They are helpful and friendly," said another. "We care for each other." "Everyone says, 'hi.'" "People share what they have." The people here are "real people." "I know everybody down here." "People on the streets show me how to survive." "Friendly neighbours." "People helping each other." "People know me." "It's good to be with people like you." "I don't feel lonely here." I like "the people, poor people, open minded people." We have "safety from knowing people and people helping people." I like "being me and being known," said one man. Another liked, "How real the people are."

### (b) The community

"It's a community of suffering but the spirit is here," said one person. "Once you've been here, you're always welcome." "Sense of community" was listed many times as well as "community support," "community action," and the "strength of the community." "People pushed from everywhere else work together here," said one. "We're in the heart of the community which is us," said another.

### (c) The services

We have "easy access to all the services," said one person. The DTES is "a good hub and [has easy] access to the rest of the city," said another. "I don't need to take the bus," said another. "I just walk around." We have "food and free services here." Others mentioned food: "You can't starve here," "free food," "the cafeteria

at Carnegie." "Resources for low income people," said one. "Support services, Carnegie, Crabtree, Sheway," said another. "The Womens' Centre is like a family," one woman said, and others agreed.

### (d) The lack of judging

"Here you don't have to justify who you are," said one person. There's a "lack of judg(ing) and a strong sense of loyalty," another said. "I don't feel stared at," said another. "I'm scared that classism will come with condos," said one woman. The people here are "unpretentious" said another, and "I don't feel alienated here." Many used the phrase "non-judgmental" or "not being judged" to describe what they liked about



Visioning at First United Church.

the DTES. "You can be with people and not have to change," said one woman. "We're all equal," said another.

### (e) What else people like

A person in social housing said he liked the management and the affordability. Several said they liked the strength of the people and the neighbourhood and how they fought for their rights. Others mentioned street nurses, casualness, free resources like computers, Insite,

## "Here you don't have to justify who you are."



VANDU, Lifeskills, Sun Yat Sen Gardens, CRAB and Oppenheimer Parks, heritage buildings, shopping in Chinatown, access to doctors, services without stigma and “The community stands as one.”

## 2) What makes us strong?

When asked what makes us strong, the most popular answers involved unity, spirit, friends, and struggle. At J. C. Leman folks said, “People helping people” and “The way people unite” makes us strong.

At Lifeskills, one person said, “How accepting and how adaptable people are with each other,” and others agreed.

At the Women Centre, they said the “Small town community spirit,” “All the support groups,” and “People fight for what we want.” One woman said, “When they say ‘go away maggots,’ we still come back,” a powerful insight into how some people in the DTES feel they are perceived by people outside their neighbourhood.

At the WISH drop-in six women put stars beside: “We’re survivors. We come from turbulence and have inner strengths. Eight put stars beside “Sense of sisterhood that all the girls feel down here.” Three put stars beside “Our similarities help us understand others around us.”

At the VANDU women’s meeting most comments about making us strong involved friends, spirit, unity and survival.

Folks at the Ford Building stressed “solidarity” and community spirit along with affordable housing as factors that make us strong. One person said, “You guys [CCAP members] protesting on TV.”

The Carnegie Learning Centre folks talked about volunteers, and how low income people are comrades in the “same boat.” Spirit, unity and acceptance were also mentioned.

At the Aboriginal Front Door “support” garnered 11 stars, and “compassion” 5. “All of us uniting and standing up for our class,” said one person about what makes us strong.

At Lifeskills, the most popular strengths were, “Friendships,” “All the BS we go through makes us strong,” and “Lots of assets, resources.”

Two men said nothing makes us strong in the DTES. One changed his mind, saying “Maybe the unity of the people against the politicians.”

## 3) What is the first thing that would improve your life in the DTES?

There was a lot of unity in the answers to this question at the visioning sessions. Housing, income and health services were the most frequent comments, with housing at the lead.

### (a) Housing

At the Aboriginal Front Door (AFD), with 32 people participating, 31 stars were put on topics that related to housing: affordable housing, native housing, housing with my own bathroom, low income apartments for couples, rent control, housing for people with pets, low rent housing, “no to condos, yes to affordable housing.” One person wanted the AFD to own and run housing and another wanted more BC housing. The item which had the most stars (14) was “less waiting for [affordable] housing.”

At the Carnegie Learning Centre five items were about affordable housing.

People at the Ford building put the most stars (7) beside “self-contained welfare rate housing where we can bring people over and cook a decent meal.” In all 19 stars were on housing related items including “stable housing—not being chased away by bulldozers.”

**“I’m tired of having to choose between types of bad housing...”**



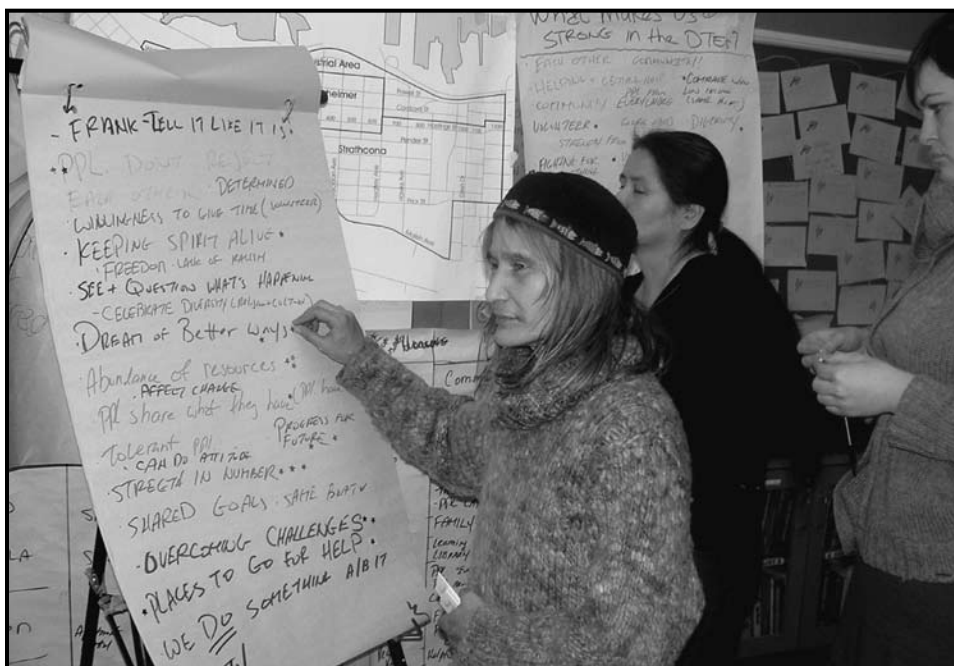
At the VANDU Women's Group 13 stars were beside housing items like "proper social housing for everyone," and "larger social housing (not just jail sized rooms)."

A woman at the DTES Womens' Centre said she was tired of "having to choose between types of bad housing: mice running in mattresses versus never clean washrooms versus bedbugs."

At WISH, housing-related items got 12 stars.

At First United, 21 people put 27 stars beside housing related items. The comment that got the most stars (7) was "knowing that everyone here has safe, clean, affordable housing." The woman who said this then talked about Darrell Mikasko, a homeless man who burned to death trying to keep warm and how he "died because the government didn't give a shit and that's got to stop." A huge applause erupted from the group. Another person said we need "adequate accommodation with a kitchen, private bathroom and room to work and store my stuff... so I don't have to get dressed to go to the bathroom."

Of the 22 people at the Carnegie Centre visioning 15 put stars beside housing related items: "A home instead of just a place to stay," "to have my own kitchen, bathroom, clean air, nice view,"



Stickers go up at the Learning Centre.

**"I need...a kitchen, private bathroom and room to work and store my stuff... so I don't have to get dressed to go to the bathroom."**

and "it hurts to see our friends homeless—its too painful to witness every day."

### (b) Health

At the AFD 8 people put stars beside health items like "not doing drugs," "more harm reduction services," and "better health." At the Learning Centre 9 items were about health services: "doctors for house calls," "doctors, healthcare, better hours," "24 hour outreach trauma," "walk in detox", and "treatment centers." At the VANDU Womens' Group 10 stars were placed beside health related items like "something to keep me off drugs," "more clinic staff—they aren't accepting new patients" and "another Dr. Peter Centre because this is a hub for HIV infected people." At WISH 5 stars were put on "detox on demand." At Carnegie, 15 folks put stars

beside support services like "stores for low income people," "opportunities to learn new things," "more resources for people to get off dope," "more things to attract children," and "higher quality donated food."

### (c) Income

At the AFD 7 people put stars beside income points like "more money," "good paying job," and "better welfare rates." At the Learning Centre people called for more jobs for local people and more money, including welfare and job opportunities. At the VANDU Womens' Group 17 stars were put on income-



**Listening at the Learning Centre.**

related items like “increase welfare” (14), “\$16 per hour for minimum wage,” and “equal welfare eligibility.” At WISH higher welfare got the most stars (13). At First United, six people put their stars beside “decent income.” At Lifeskills 13 stars went to income-related items like “more income” and 4 people said they wanted “good food,” or “everybody to have more food, more meat, more protein.”

The importance of better housing, incomes and health to DTES residents is confirmed by the DTES Demographic study which noted that housing, income and health were mentioned the most as what folks needed help with.

#### **(d) How the neighbourhood is treated**

Comments about how the neighbourhood is stereotyped by outsiders came up at several sessions. At the VANDU Womens’ Group one woman said it would improve her life if we could “educate people who we are and who we are not, that is we are not all junkies. We are artistic, good stock, brothers and sisters, etc.” At First United folks wanted to, “get the message out as to what this community really is: more than 4 blocks of hell. We have creativity and intelligence.” One person said the one thing that would improve her life is for the “public to change its view of us so we can get more housing.” Another said it would improve his life if there

was “respect for our community from authority.” And a third said, with 3 others agreeing, that there should be “more consultation with the actual people who live here about what we want.” Seven people agreed that, “All levels of government should respect and abide by basic humanitarian values.”

#### **(e) Safety**

Safety in the traditional sense was not mentioned very much in the visioning sessions except by the Chinese seniors. One was afraid of being mugged. Another thought that if there were fewer panhandlers, the streets would be safer. Two wanted drug dealers moved away from the entrance to the Carnegie Centre. But most folks talked about safety in a different way. At VANDU, for example, people said one of the main reasons they liked the DTES is because of its safety. They felt safe because they knew



**Putting up stickers up at Aboriginal Front Door.**

people and people knew them. At the Carnegie visioning session 9 stickers went to another kind of safety: “Security to know that the DTES will be here and you won’t be pushed on. If some new social housing is built, it should still be the kind of neighbourhood where you don’t have to worry about what people think about you.”

#### **(f) Other categories**

Other comments about what would improve your life in the community included grocery stores, or

a shopping centre or a Superstore. “A just treaty process so I could have my land.”

**“A just treaty process  
so I could have my land.”**

At Lifeskills one person wanted a three zone bus pass so he could look for work.

## The Questionnaire

CCAP and LILAHC (Low Income Land Use and Housing Coalition) made up the questionnaire based on information from the visioning sessions, changes in the neighbourhood, and testing on a group of about 20 Carnegie Action members who are homeless, or live in hotels and social housing. The questionnaire is one page with 17 questions (see appendix A). The final question had to be adapted by surveyors to read, “If you lose your housing (or if you are house-less and get pushed out of the neighbourhood) where will you end up?” This is because we realized that we were surveying many homeless people who couldn’t answer the original question.

### Who did the interviewing?

Volunteers from CCAP and LILAHC went to the streets and local hubs like Lifeskills, a centre mostly for people who are homeless, the welfare line up on cheque day, Oppenheimer Park, the Magdalene Society, and the houses on Jackson Street across from Oppenheimer Park. They went to the streets outside of First United Church, the Health Contact Centre, the DTES clinic, Carnegie, Four Corners bank, the United We Can Bottle Depot, and the corner of Columbia and Hastings. Some went to CRAB Park, Insite and the Evelyn Saller Centre. They filled out the questionnaires for people who were offered a cigarette for their efforts.

Diane Wood, one of the volunteer surveyors, said “I loved doing the survey. ‘What would you do if you lost your housing?’ was the most difficult question. People really paused. Then I’d learn about their home up North, or their mother, or that they’d had HIV for 22 years. I didn’t rush it. People would ask me questions too.” Wendy Pedersen who also got residents to fill out questionnaires said that she sat on the steps at the welfare office at 6:30 a.m. on cheque day as about 15 people crowded around listening to the questions and answers. “They said they felt respected,” said Pedersen, “because someone was actually asking them important questions about them and their community.”

### Who answered the questionnaire?

There were 655 people who filled out the questionnaire. A few more women (337) than men (302). Five said they were transgender. 177 respondents said they lived outside or in a shelter; 212 said they lived in a residential hotel or SRO; 203 said they lived in social housing; and 63 said “other” which was mostly apartments or parts of houses or whole houses.

Most of the people who answered the questionnaire got their income from welfare or disability although people often checked both,



**Anna filling out questionnaires at the welfare office at 6:30am!**

along with other options. Hardly anyone (9) checked EI, meaning that Employment Insurance is virtually irrelevant as a source of income in the DTES. Fifteen had no income. Thirty worked full time; 91 worked part time; 54 panhandled; 67 binned; and 99 checked "other." Words written in for "other" include pension, sex work, wire, and crime. 15 said they had no income and 23 said they got income from Canada Pension Plan.

## What people said

### A question about the community

**Question 5:** Are these statements true to you?

Most of my friends are in the DTES: 369

My community is in the DTES: 464

The DTES is my home: 472

I care about the DTES: 505

Most people answering this question checked off all 4 answers, showing a huge amount of support and care for the DTES by its residents.

### Questions about needs

**Question 9:** Welfare and disability rates should be increased to a livable level which is \$1300 a month.

Disagree: 3%

#2: 2%

#3: 4%

#4: 5%

Agree: 86%

The \$1300 figure is approximately the federal Market Basket Measure adjusted to 2007. According to the federal government this is what is needed to live a frugal but adequate existence for a person who is not disabled. An overwhelming 86% of our respondents agree strongly with this figure, with a total of 91% agreeing somewhat or strongly. Some folks who put that they disagreed, said the amount should be higher. This question reveals a remarkable unanimity in the DTES community that incomes need to be higher than they are (welfare for a single person is \$610 a month; for a person with disabilities, \$906).

**Question 10:** How important is it to you that governments build new social housing in the DTES that you can afford?

Not important: 2%

#2: 2%

#3: 4%

#4: 4%

Very important: 88%

This answer is another example of the overwhelming consensus in the DTES that affordable social housing must be built in the community.

**Question 11:** How important is it to you that all new social housing be the size of 400 sq. ft. (the size of a very small one bedroom apartment)?

Not important: 5%

#2: 3%

#3: 9%

#4: 7%

Very important: 76%

This answer confirms that DTES residents want to live in standard sized apartments, not mini-apartments or rooms.

Some folks wrote on the questionnaire that they needed even bigger units for their families. The province is funding some new buildings with so-called small suites, saying that they are cheaper than standard sized small

apartments. The Carnegie Action Project has a long standing policy that new suites should be big enough that their residents will consider them a



**The Savoy Hotel is to be renovated, but rooms are not new social housing nor acceptable homes.**

home and want to remain in and contribute to the community.

**Question 12:** How important is it to have alcohol and drug treatment on demand for all who want it?

Not important: 3%

#2: 2%

#3: 5%

#4: 5%

Important: 87%

(doesn't add up to 100 due to rounding)

Again, the answer to this question shows a huge consensus on the need for accessible drug and alcohol treatment in the neighbourhood.

**Question 13:** How do you feel about living for the long term in a "renovated" hotel room with shared bathroom and kitchen?

Least OK: 59%

2: 10%

#3: 15%

#4: 5%

Most OK: 11%

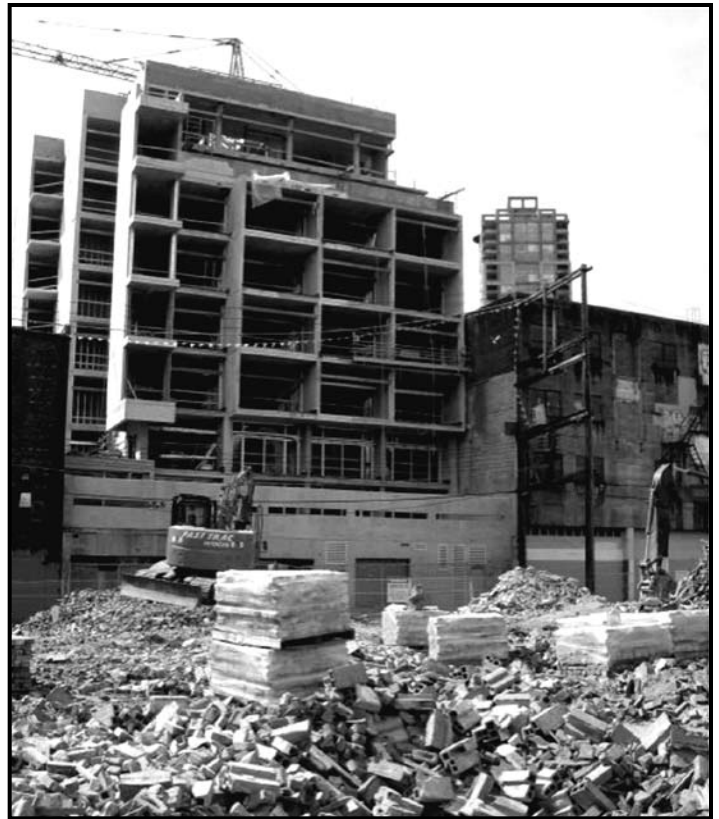
The province recently bought 17 hotels to renovate and be managed by non profit operators. This is good because it saves the hotels from speculation and demolition, keeps rents at welfare levels, and will result in marginally better housing. But the SROs still have tiny rooms, no kitchens, a bathroom down the hall and they are not upgraded for earthquakes. They do not provide desperately needed additional housing because they were mostly full when purchased. The answers show that nearly 70% of respondents would prefer not to have to live in a renovated hotel room for the long term.

**Question 14:** If you had safe, secure housing in the DTES, would you like to continue to live here?

No: 5%

Yes: 95%

While the common stereotype is that the DTES is a hell hole that everyone want to escape from, the reality, these answers show, is that 95% of our respondents would like to continue living in



**Making way for condos on Hastings Street.**

the DTES if they had safe, secure housing. The City's Demographic Study found that only 46% of social housing residents and 16% of SRO residents would stay in the DTES "if they could afford to." While the two surveys asked different questions, we plan to re-check how many people would like to continue to live in the DTES in our future visioning steps.

## Condo questions

Because condos are being built in the neighbourhood at a rate of 3 condos to every 1 unit of singles social housing and some residents expressed concern about condo development, and because the desired income mix in the area is a huge issue, 4 questions were on this topic.

**Question 6:** Who would you like to see living in the DTES in the future?

Mostly current low-income and working poor

DTES residents: 43%

Mostly condo owners: .5% (3 people)

A mix of low-income and working poor with a few condo owners: 57%

Virtually no one wants condo owners to take



### Will low-income people get new permanent homes too?

over, although a majority feel that a few condos would be ok if the community housed mostly existing residents and low-income people.

### Question 7: Do you think poor-bashing will increase if more condo owners live in the DTES?

A lot: 59%

#2: 11%

#3: 15%

#4: 5%

Not at all: 10%

Poor bashing is when people who are poor are discriminated against, stereotyped, humiliated, despised, pitied, patronized, ignored, blamed and/or falsely accused of being lazy, drunk, stupid, uneducated and not wanting to work. A total of 70% of respondents think poor bashing will increase if more condo owners live in the area. Only 15% think it won't increase.

### Question 8: How comfortable would you feel if half the people living in the DTES were condo owners?

Not comfortable: 49%

#2: 13%

#3: 23%

#4: 8%

Very comfortable: 8%

A total of 62% would not feel comfortable with half the people in the DTES being condo owners, while 16% would be ok with this, and 23% feel neutral about it.

**Question 15:** Developers are talking about building towers 20-40 floors high in the DTES. Condos would outnumber the social housing and start to dominate the neighbourhood. Are you OK with this?

Least OK: 68%

#2: 10%

#3: 11%

#4: 5%

Most OK: 6%

The answers to this question reveal that a whopping 78% of respondents are not OK with condos dominating the neighbourhood and only 11 % seem to think condo domination would be OK. While it is fashionable to say that neighbourhoods should have mixed incomes, and city elected and hired officials adhere to this concept (at least for low income communities), they don't seem to have considered how the actual low income residents feel about having people who can afford expensive condos overwhelming their neighbourhood. Some think that concentrating low income people in one area causes problems. But could it be that the problems are caused by lack of housing, poor housing, inadequate income, and insufficient health services, not the concentration?

### Question about housing loss

**Question 16:** If you lose your DTES housing and you can't live here anymore, where do you think you'll end up?

The most common answer (105) was "on the street" or "homeless" or in a shelter. "Don't know" was the second most frequent at 35. Others included "Burnaby," "Surrey," "New Westminster," "up North," "family," "jail," "suicide," etc. The answers show that if people lose their DTES homes, they will try to find homes where they can, in other neighbourhoods, towns and cities. Many don't seem to think finding a new affordable home is possible and believe they will end up on the streets, in jail or dead.

## Conclusions

At this point the vision of the low income DTES community seems pretty clear: Residents want to maintain a primarily low-income community with better affordable housing, incomes and health services. They want outsiders to recognize the dignity and spirit of the DTES. And they want a voice, proportional to their numbers, in what happens to their community.



## Next steps

Over the rest of the year CCAP hopes to work with LILHAC and community mapping experts to design and implement a neighbourhood mapping process at community hubs. We are considering a process that would elicit the low income community's vision of key landmarks, places and attitudes that should be preserved as well as what is needed for the future and where it should go. We intend to seek input that would identify what problems low income residents experience in the neighbourhood and potential solutions. And we intend to consult more about what income mix low income residents would like to see in the future. CCAP wants to follow the mapping sessions with 1 or 2 open houses to involve residents who may not have been involved in the other steps.





## Appendix B:

### CCAP and LILAHC

#### Who is CCAP?



The Carnegie Community Action Project is a project of the Board of the Carnegie Community Centre Association. The Association is made up of over 5000 members of the Centre. CCAP has one staff person, organizer Wendy Pedersen, and several regular volunteers. It works on getting more and better housing in the Downtown Eastside community and better incomes. CCAP is also working to develop a vision and land use policies for a low income friendly community.

#### Who is LILAHC?

The Low-Income Land-Use and Housing Coalition (LILAHC) is a coalition of 18 people and some of their organizations who live/work in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside [DTES] who affirm that the redevelopment of the DTES must include the voices and reflect the Vision, of the predominantly low-income DTES community who make up 3/4 of its population.

LILAHC's process is grassroots and takes its inspiration from the heads and hearts of 1000s of DTES residents, harvesting a resident driven script for the future of the DTES which keeps low-income residents at the centre of redevelopment plans.

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## Appendix C: Do low income people live in all sub areas of the DTES?

CCAP considers the Downtown Eastside to have the same boundaries as the city does (see map). The city divides the DTES into 7 subareas: Oppenheimer District, Industrial, Victory Square, Gastown, Chinatown, Thornton Park, and Strathcona. According to the DTES Housing Plan, 67 percent of DTES residents lived below what is commonly thought of as the poverty line in 2001. According to the Housing Plan, over 2000 people in Gastown live in SROs, social housing and in Special Needs Residential Facilities. 1891 live in Strathcona, 853 in Chinatown, 1156 in Victory Square, and 4038 or only slightly over one-third (38%) in the Oppenheimer District, generally considered to have the bulk of the low income population in the DTES. We note this because the numbers make it clear that low income people live in all areas of the DTES, and therefore their wishes, needs, housing and services should be considered and protected in all sub areas.







NATIVE HOUSING  
" " " " " " " "

SENIORS HOUSING  
SHELTERS  
" " " " " "



HOW MANY CONDOS?



Security to know DTES will be here +  
You won't be pushed on



HELPING  
EACH  
OTHER