

# Community Vision for Change

in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside



CCAP

CCAP

Vancouver June 2010

By Wendy Pedersen & Jean Swanson





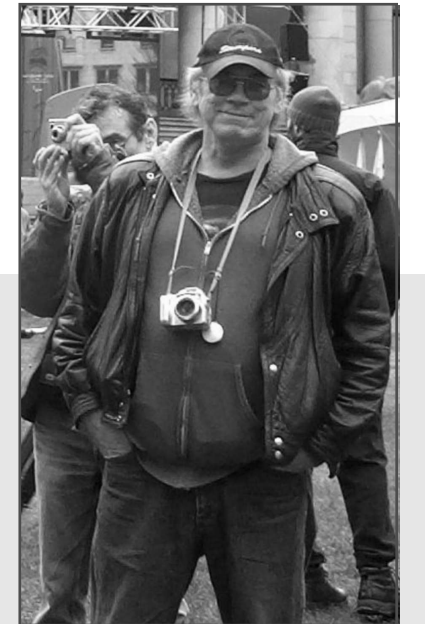
CCAP acknowledges that our neighbourhood lies within unceded Traditional Territory of the Coast Salish People

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The Carnegie Community Action Project (CCAP) is a project of the Carnegie Community Centre Association, which has about 6000 members, most of whom live in the Downtown Eastside (DTES) of Vancouver.

CCAP does community based research and organizing on social housing, income and gentrification issues.

We organize residents to have a voice in planning for the future of the area. Our overall goal is to create a DTES that is safe, healthy and affordable to the low-income residents who live here now.



**This Vision is dedicated to  
Norma Jean Baptiste (above right),  
Harold Asham (right) and Fern Charlie.  
All three helped form the Vision,  
but died prematurely.**



**Vancity**

Support for this project does not necessarily imply Vancity's endorsement of the findings or contents of this report.



# **Community Vision for Change**

**in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside**

**"I know this place like the back of my heart."**

A first nations' man recently told me  
he had come to the DTES to die  
he heard the propaganda  
that this is only a place of death disease and despair  
and since his life had become a hopeless misery  
he came here specifically to die  
but he said  
since living in the DTES  
what with the people he has met  
and the groups he has found  
he now wants very much to live  
and his words go directly  
to the heart of what makes for real community  
a new life out of apparent death

- excerpt from "Raise Shit" by Bud Osborn  
in Keys to Kingdoms, 1999

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**Photos:** The Blackbird, Sharon Burns, Chris Bevecqua,  
Doug Shanks, Savannah Walling, Carnegie Centre archives

**Quotes throughout this report are from CCAP's *Our Place & Our Words* report**

Layout: flux design

**"Look how many places there are...in such a small area -**

# CONTENTS

Summary .....	Page 2
Introduction .....	Page 4
How we made the Vision .....	Page 5
Feedback on the <i>Seeing it our Way</i> report .....	Page 7
DTES Vision .....	Page 7
DTES Community Values.....	Page 7
12 Key Actions.....	Page 8
Our special community .....	Page 10
Implementing the Vision.....	Page 11
A huge thank you.....	Page 11
<b>Appendix A</b>	
Gentrification .....	Page 12
<b>Appendix B</b>	
DTES displacement facts .....	Page 14
Sources .....	Page 14



**how fortunate we are, and how much we have to lose.” 1**



## **SUMMARY**

This is a summary of CCAP's Vision and Action plan for the Downtown Eastside (DTES) based on over two years of intensive work by the Carnegie Community Action Project (CCAP) with 1,200 low-income DTES residents, and in co-operation with many DTES organizations.

This Vision is a declaration that the DTES low-income community has a right to exist in Vancouver and to seek improvements for itself.

If this Vision is not implemented, more and more market development will push into the DTES, displacing residents and destroying the community assets that provide so much essential support to remaining low-income residents.

The Vision is based on the humanistic values of the DTES's low-income residents, and the conviction that residents themselves, with help from government, will be able to strengthen and improve their already strong community by building on assets that are currently present.

CCAP proposes that this Vision be the foundation and guide for future development in the DTES and will seek to work with the City, landowners, community organizations, agencies, businesses and residents to that end.

# Vision

Honour the Coast Salish People on whose unceded Traditional Territory the DTES resides;  
 Celebrate our strong community of urban Aboriginal and low-income people  
 of many ancestries, abilities, cultures, health conditions, genders, ages and sexual orientations;  
 Put people first and welcome all who advocate for affordable  
 low-income housing and respect our vibrant community values;  
 Ensure low-income people have affordable homes and access to resources to meet our needs;  
 Unite in fair processes and act in peaceful and necessary ways to expand our abilities,  
 overcome adversity and protect our community.

## DTES Community Values

Working for justice and the community;  
 Strengthening our community;  
 Respecting each other and nature;  
 Making decisions about our own neighbourhood;  
 Accepting people without judgment;  
 Cooperating;  
 Appreciating diversity;  
 Providing sanctuary for people who aren't welcome in other places;  
 Caring;  
 Respecting all generations and their roles in creating a healthy community;  
 Building harmony;  
 Empathizing with those who are suffering.

## The 12 Key Actions

The actions needed to implement the Vision are as follows:

1. Build social housing for low-income people;
2. Tackle systemic poverty;
3. Stop gentrification;
4. Improve safety by working with police to provide a better understanding of DTES residents from their perspective, dealing with security guard harassment, non-resident drinkers, and replacing the illegal drug market with a legal market based on health and human rights principles;
5. Improve health services;
6. Support and fund DTES arts and culture;
7. Develop an economy that serves and employs local residents;
8. Ensure public spaces are public, not gated, sufficient, safe, and welcoming;
9. Keep towers out and retain heritage buildings;
10. Involve DTES residents in neighbourhood decisions;
11. Attract more children;
12. Create a DTES image that honours and respects low-income residents.

Some of these Actions can be done by residents themselves; some by residents plus others, and some require major actions and/or funds from government.

# INTRODUCTION

The Carnegie Community Action Project's (CCAP) Visioning process was unforgettable, often moving, and it was a privilege for the writers of this report to be part of it. One stage of the Visioning involved copying down, word for word, hundreds of meaningful stories residents told about life in the DTES. In what other Vancouver neighbourhood would people say things like: "I helped raise the totem pole with the eagle on top." "We had a kissing booth at the hard times festival." "It's where thousands of people gathered for the On To Ottawa trek in the Dirty Thirties." "There's always someone there to have a conversation with about what's happening." "Years ago we had a Vision quest there."

About Carnegie, one of the most meaningful places to DTES residents, the authors heard things such as: "It's our living room." "It's the first place I ever found people who are comfortable with who I am." "My social life is tied here; it branches out from here." "The kitchen was my first volunteer position. It was the first time in my life that I was open and honest about my drug addiction. When I told the [the people] in the kitchen, they didn't judge me, and accepted me. It was a big step towards my recovery." "It's where I can be a powwow dancer."

Look a little bit deeper, Vancouver. What some people call a slum, DTES residents call a tight knit community with assets worth preserving. Spend a bit of time here. Catch an eye and you'll get a nod as you walk down the street. Sometimes it takes a long time to get home because neighbours have so many conversations at street corners. People fall in love and get married here. People tell lots of stories about their friends at funerals. In the DTES, residents form decades-long friendships and share resources in a way that builds a communal sense of how to be together that doesn't exist in other Vancouver neighbourhoods. In that way, the DTES has a unique and authentic character like a small town.

There is not much time to preserve this authentic community, often called "the heart of the city." Pressure to gentrify the area is intense. But we are confident about the future of our resilient neighbourhood. That confidence comes out of a long tradition of struggle and successes by DTES residents to organize and advocate for ourselves.

It is in this tradition of struggle that CCAP presents this DTES Vision. It was developed from two years of extensive research and consultation with 1,200 low-income DTES



residents, in co-operation with many DTES groups.

This Vision is a declaration that the DTES low-income community has a right to exist in Vancouver and to seek improvements for itself.

This Vision is presented in the context of "Right to the City" movements developing across many continents and supported by the United Nations. These movements challenge urban governments to fulfill the human rights of all urban residents. As David Harvey writes in New York City's Right to the City Platform, they also challenge "the naked class privilege to determine the character and meaning of urban life," and "demand a more egalitarian and democratic form of governance that acts in the interest of the common people." Writing in the United Nations document, *Urban Policies and the Right to the City*, Brown and Kristiansen explain that a rights-based approach to urban policies can also "help generate the political will and create a culture of resource allocation that places the needs of vulnerable groups and individuals on an equal footing with the interests of those who are better off."

This Vision is also presented in the context of a continuing



struggle by DTES residents to have more say in their own community. The Community Directions process in 2001 and 2002 was part of this process and produced an Action list similar to the one in this report.

The Vision is based on the humanistic values of the DTES's low-income residents and the idea that residents themselves, with help from government, will be able to strengthen and improve their already strong community by building on community assets that are already present.

This Vision is not about moving “the problem,” putting a façade on “the problem” or diluting “the problem” of the DTES. It sees low-income DTES residents, with their lived experience in their own neighbourhood as the experts on how to build on the strengths of the community to get needed improvements.

If this Vision is not implemented, gentrification will take over the DTES, displacing low-income residents and destroying the community assets that support those who remain. Slowing the pace of market development will allow time for more low-income housing to be built, and help ensure that the changes that take place in the DTES actually benefit the people who live there now.

CCAP proposes that this Vision be the foundation and guide for future development in the DTES and seeks to work with the City, landowners, community organizations, agencies, businesses and residents to that end.

## HOW WE MADE THE VISION

### Who participated in CCAP's consultation process?

Participants in CCAP's consultation process included people who are homeless, or live in SROs (Single Room Occupancy Hotels), social housing, co-ops or apartments. They are people who are Aboriginal, have Chinese, European, Latino and other ancestries; are straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered. They are people who have or don't have serious health and addiction issues. Some people do volunteer, casual, part time work or full time work. Some do survival work like sex work, binning, and selling things on the street.

### What do we mean by low income?

CCAP is using Statistics Canada's before tax Low Income Cutoff (LICO) as its definition of low income. In 2006 this ranged from \$21,202 (about \$10 an hour) per year for a single person, to \$39,399 (about \$19 an hour for one person) for a family of four.



Source: City of Vancouver, DTES Revitalization webpage

In the DTES about 70% of residents have incomes below this level. Within the DTES people are not “marginalized” by low income. They are the majority. About 30% have incomes above the low-income cutoff.

### Who lives in the DTES?

The population of the DTES is about 16,000. The DTES has a higher proportion of seniors, single people, men, Aboriginal people and people of Chinese ancestry than in most other Vancouver neighbourhoods.

### The experience of poverty

Because about 70% of DTES residents have low-incomes, the community has a shared experience of poverty that should be central in its planning processes. In the DTES, many residents:

- Have experienced discrimination based on race, sexual orientation, gender, mental or physical disability, addiction, low income or a combination of these;
- Live in very small and/or inadequate housing;
- Are unemployed, work part-time, or volunteer;
- Are receiving low fixed incomes and cannot afford anything beyond day to day necessities;
- Have health and/or addiction concerns that require therapeutic physical and social activity;
- May feel isolated from family and friends who have more money;
- Have experienced major trauma due to displacement, child apprehensions, residential schools, colonization and other systemic abuses;
- Are involved in survival based black market activities such as selling sex, their belongings, or drugs;
- Are dependent on agencies over which they have no control;
- Are homeless.

### DTES history of struggle for human rights

The DTES has been a place where residents have struggled for human rights for decades. It is located on unceded Coast Salish territory. Aboriginal people now living in the DTES are dealing with the impact of colonization, the lack of self-government and other systemic abuses.

In the 1930s unemployed workers organized in the DTES for work, wages and social programs. In the late 1800's, the Chinese working poor built their community in the low-rent DTES where, after 62-years of federal racist laws, a community effort organized and gained full citizen rights in 1947. In the 1960s residents stopped a freeway from bisecting their community. Japanese Canadian DTES residents were interned during World War II.

Since 1970 area residents have had to fight for years to get facilities that other neighbourhoods had, like a community centre and a waterfront park. In the 1990s the community united to press police to find what happened to its missing women. Later it united in the work to open North America's first safe injection site. Participants in CCAP's consultation process referred frequently to the rich cultural history of all these groups within the DTES.

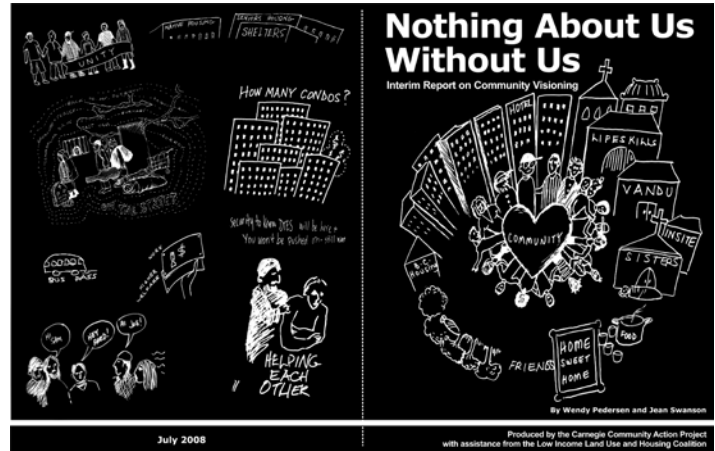
## Research and consultation

CCAP's consultation process included:

**Visioning with 295 people:** This process, with low-income DTES residents in 15 Visioning workshops at 12 community hubs, found that residents like the people, the community, the services and the non-judgmental nature of their community.

**Questionnaire with 655 people:** The questionnaire discovered that over 85% of low income residents said it was very important to have higher incomes, new affordable social housing and alcohol and drug treatment on demand; 95% would want to stay in the DTES if they had safe, secure housing; a majority felt that a few condos in the DTES would be OK if the community housed mostly existing residents and low-income people. Results of the Visioning and Questionnaire were written in *Nothing About Us Without Us*.

**Mapping with 200:** The mapping sessions took place with mostly different people than the Visioning. They included 23 workshops at 18 community hubs. The mapping process revealed 11 major community assets:



1. The sense of community is strong;
2. Residents feel accepted and at home;
3. Residents have empathy for people with health and addiction issues;
4. Residents feel connected to a rich and authentic cultural heritage;
5. Arts practices and programs involve many community members;
6. Green spaces help residents make a connection to nature and are spiritually important;
7. Residents put in thousands of hours of volunteer work to build and maintain their community;
8. Necessities are cheap or free and nearby;
9. Health and social services are close, needed, and appreciated;
10. Many residents work for social justice;
11. Social housing provides a stable base for thousands of residents.

Community includes a sense of belonging, support networks, an informal economy, places to volunteer and contribute, and easy access to essential health and social services. For low-income DTES residents, community also includes a link to the geographical place where all of these relationships take place. Middle class people have access to transportation so they can travel to other places to meet friends, get services and support. But people with low incomes can't afford bus fare and cars so their local community is crucial to their well-being.

Results of the mapping are included in *Our Place and Our Words*.

### Three Planning Days with 44 community leaders:

Participants wrote a draft Vision, agreed on a list of Community Values, agreed to a list of Actions needed to implement the Vision and Values and also discussed specific problems in the area and ways to solve them.



Results from the Planning Days were written in *Seeing it our Way* and circulated to participants and others in the community for feedback.

## FEEDBACK ON THE *Seeing it our Way* REPORT

*Seeing it our Way* was printed and given to, and/or discussed with the following people in the DTES whose honest input was requested:

- 44 community leaders who participated in the three Planning Days;
- About 60 people who attended a Town Hall meeting about the report on December 7;
- About 25 people at an Urban Core workers meeting on December 8;
- People who read *Seeing it our Way* when it was posted in community hubs on bulletin boards;
- People who were sent the report by email, including CCAP advisors, some DTES business and property owners, and community residents and leaders.

Many, especially people who participated in the Planning Days, said they agreed with the report.

The authors of this report have tried to incorporate feedback into the Vision, Values and Actions when it was consistent with the views of the majority of the 1,200 people involved in the consultation process. Many thanks to all who gave input.

## DTES VISION

This is the Vision agreed to at the Planning Days and modified by community feedback.



Our Vision is to:

- Honour the Coast Salish people on whose unceded Traditional Territory the DTES resides;
- Celebrate our strong community of urban Aboriginal and low-income people of many ancestries, abilities, cultures, health conditions, genders, ages and sexual orientations;
- Put people first and welcome all who advocate for affordable low-income housing and respect our vibrant community values;
- Ensure that low-income people have affordable homes and have access to resources to meet our needs;
- Unite in fair processes and act in peaceful and necessary ways to expand our abilities, overcome adversity and protect our community.

## DTES COMMUNITY VALUES

These are the Community Values agreed to at the Planning Days and modified by community feedback.

Our Community Values are:

- Working for justice and the community;
- Strengthening our community;
- Respecting each other and nature;
- Making decisions about our own neighbourhood;
- Accepting people without judgment;
- Cooperating;
- Appreciating diversity;
- Providing sanctuary for people who aren't welcome in other places;
- Caring;
- Respecting all generations and their roles in creating a healthy community;
- Building harmony;
- Empathizing with those who are suffering.



# THE 12 KEY ACTIONS

This list combines and summarizes the Action list with the Solutions list in *Seeing it our Way*, and incorporates feedback from DTES groups and individuals and the Town Hall meeting. People working on these actions can take into account the specific solutions suggested in the Planning Day workshops and reported in *Seeing it our Way*.

## 1. Build social housing

Build high-quality, self-contained affordable and appropriate homes for Aboriginal and low-income DTES residents:

- The 700 DTES residents who are homeless are first priority for new housing;
- Current DTES residents who have low incomes are also a priority;
- SROs should be replaced with self contained social housing in 10 years, not 53 years, the current replacement rate;
- A variety of housing types, affordable to low-income people, are needed: housing for the founding Aboriginal, Chinese, working class and other communities, new housing for people living in SROs, supportive housing, independent living housing, housing for families and children, housing for seniors, housing for people with disabilities, communal and co-op housing, intergenerational housing, and housing for couples;
- Supportive housing should be covered by the Residential Tenancy Act.

Some residents suggested mixed low-income housing in buildings that have a mission to house diverse people, including those who need support. A combination of informal and formal supports needs to be built in with residents having control over the mission, values and goals of the housing as well as admission criteria for new tenants. Others felt more comfortable in buildings where all residents needed and received supports. A variety of types are needed.

## 2. Tackle systemic poverty (these measures will also improve health)

- Increase welfare, disability, pensions and minimum wage and link them to the cost of living to sustain a quality standard of living. End earnings clawbacks of welfare, EI and disability incomes;
- Work with business and government to train and employ low-income and Aboriginal DTES residents to design and build our community;
- Ensure that Aboriginal people are at the table and listened to with respect and that their expertise is valued;
- Get education grants for DTES residents.

## 3. Stop gentrification

Develop and implement a plan to preserve the assets and secure the tenure of the existing Aboriginal and low-income community before more unaffordable condos are built (Condos increase property values and speed up economic and social forces that displace low-income residents):

- Use zoning and other city planning tools to implement this plan;
- Implement a ten year Stabilization Plan for the DTES to give time for key elements of the Vision and Actions to be implemented.
- Ensure post secondary students do not inadvertently displace existing low-income residents from housing like SROs and services like the Carnegie cafeteria used by current low-income residents.

## 4. Improve safety

1. Work with police to provide better understanding of DTES residents:

- Develop a program where DTES residents share their perspectives on mental health issues, cultural customs, empathy, anti-racism, poverty, and non-violent conflict resolution;
- Pursue policing that focuses on predators, not criminalization of the poor;
- Develop peer safety patrols who reflect the diversity of the low-income community;
- Set up an efficient system so it is easy for citizens to identify police and report incidents of police brutality to the Office of the Police Complaint Commissioner;
- Work to change the system so that police don't investigate themselves;
- Hold an inquiry into why it took police so long to look for the community's missing women to ensure it does not happen again.

2. Security guards:

Work on a strategy for reducing the number of security guards and/or ensuring that they are not violent and respect the human rights of all local residents.

3. Non resident drinkers:

Work with the city to:

- Make bars close earlier;
- Stop increasing the number of alcohol outlets;
- Keep the soccer stadium off the waterfront to reduce harassment of local residents by drinkers;
- Stop the perception that people can come to the DTES and do whatever they want once the bars close in their neighbourhoods;
- Pay DTES residents with conflict resolution skills to monitor bar closure times and stop violence against DTES residents.

#### 4. Racism and Harassment:

Work on a program for exposing and stopping incidents of racism and harassment.

5. Work with the city to increase spaces for women and children, GBLT and Two Spirited people, improve pedestrian and cyclist safety and improve safety for sex workers.

6. Work with the City and Province to press the federal government to replace the current illegal drug market with a regulated legal market based on public health and human rights principles.

### 5. Improve health services

- Ensure that health and community services are adequate, user-centered and serve the diversity of the neighbourhood;
- Ensure that alcohol and drug treatment on demand is available;
- Create mechanisms so that health facilities are controlled by resident boards;
- Create more harm reduction services and replace the current illegal drug market with a regulated legal market based on public health and human rights principles;
- Create more safe inhalation and injection sites in the DTES and around the city so drug users who don't live in the DTES can stay in their own communities;
- Provide more services that use the peer support model;
- Create Aboriginal Healing Centres and other cultural/healing centres that deal with the consequences of colonialization and displacement;
- Encourage drug users to police themselves;
- Ensure that free or cheap nutritious food is available to all residents.

### 6. Support and fund DTES arts and culture

- Work with long-term DTES artists to secure their space in the cultural development of the neighbourhood;
- Create artist co-operatives which prioritize longtime DTES artists/artisans;
- Ensure that post secondary school programs use their resources to support and not undermine existing DTES residents and artists;
- Create a registry of arts and cultural resources that Aboriginal and low-income residents can access;
- Continue and increase funding, training and mentoring for current residents and DTES artists to engage in artistic practice.

### 7. Develop an economy that serves and employs local residents

- Work with the city to create affordable retail spaces to ensure that business attracts and serves

Aboriginal and low-income residents by selling what they need at prices they can afford, and training and hiring local residents;

- Fund resident run co-ops and social enterprises;
- Work with the city to create mechanisms to keep chain stores and franchises out of the DTES because they undermine the locally operated stores;
- Develop a legal flea market for residents to sell second hand goods and crafts;
- Expand wireless internet to the whole DTES;
- Provide education for people who want to go into the workforce.

### 8. Ensure public spaces are public

- Ensure that green and public spaces celebrate and welcome all DTES residents;
- Create more quiet green spaces;
- Create safer pedestrian spaces;
- Create more accessible public washrooms, drinking fountains and benches without bars on them, mail boxes and telephones;
- Build in extra public space before adding more residents to the area.

### 9. Keep out towers over 10 storeys unless for social housing and retain heritage buildings

### 10. Involve DTES residents in decisions

- Create mechanisms so DTES low-income residents can make decisions about what happens in our community;
- Develop a procedure for residents to suggest and approve community benefits or public amenities.
- Develop a procedure for residents to approve which businesses get city subsidies;
- Create mechanisms to make Business Improvement Associations more accountable to low income DTES residents;
- Encourage agencies and housing providers to have resident boards;
- Put and keep DTES leadership positions in DTES residents' hands. Hire DTES residents as interns so they can match their social knowledge with the skills they need to take on leadership positions.

### 11. Attract more children

Make recommendations on the types of neighbourhood changes (like housing, services, preventing Ministry apprehensions and safety improvements) that would attract more children to the neighbourhood.

### 12. Create a DTES image that honours and respects low income residents

Work on strategies for creating an image of the DTES that reflects its many assets, its diversity and strong sense of community.

## OUR SPECIAL COMMUNITY

The DTES community is special. As Terry Hunter said in the *Georgia Straight*, quoting Sandy Cameron: “The DTES community has some powerful identifiers. One is sanctuary - the community as a place of sanctuary. Another is that it’s a place of resistance; it’s a place that fights for social rights. And it’s a place of radical possibilities, a place where new ideas and new alternatives arise.” The DTES has problems but also has a long list of assets that other neighbourhoods don’t have.

### Sanctuary

Why do people who are discriminated against come to the DTES? It’s not just cheap rent. It’s because the DTES is accepting. It is a place of sanctuary where people who are suffering feel at home and get help. In CCAP’s mapping and Visioning people said this over and over. They said this acceptance was basic to their recovery from addictions.

### Human rights

Because people in the DTES are so poor, it is a centre of the struggle for human rights that apply to people in the rest of the city and the world. If the city supports

DTES residents to replace the illegal drug market with a regulated legal one, that could be a first for the country and the world. It’s worth fighting for. If you listen to residents, this area could be a model for establishing productive relations between police and low-income people—a model for the rest of the country and world. The DTES Member of Parliament is fighting to make housing a human right. The Pivot Legal Society is starting a national red tent campaign for a national housing strategy. DTES community leaders are going across the province and country helping others work on creating safe injection sites and to call for an inquiry into the missing and murdered women.

### New ideas and alternatives

Look at CCAP’s Action recommendations: Residents on agency boards, peer safety patrols, residents educating police, mentoring community leaders. These are ideas that would not have come from a different neighbourhood, but they are good ideas and deserve to be worked on. Vancouver could be a model for treating its low-income people as human beings, listening to them and acting on what they say, not simply pushing them out, improving façades in their neighbourhood, “diluting” them with richer people.





## IMPLEMENTING THE VISION

The DTES needs a comprehensive plan based on this Vision and these Actions to preserve its community assets and secure tenure for existing residents before the city encourages more condos and upscale businesses.

Some of the recommended Actions are key to the preservation of community assets and tenure for low-income people.

Slowing the pace of market development is crucial. This would slow gentrification and its ripple effects (see Appendix). If the city used rate of change mechanisms (mentioned repeatedly in the Downtown Eastside Housing Plan) to slow the pace of gentrification until good affordable housing is available for all who need it and low-income community assets are secured, then residents say that some condo development would be ok.

Building housing for low-income people would ensure that low-income people would not be physically displaced by evictions, rent increases, demolitions and renovations.

Reducing systemic poverty from low minimum wages, welfare, disability and pension rates could help low-income people bring purchasing power to the neighbourhood and allow residents to rent privately owned apartments.

Replacing the illegal drug market with a regulated legal market based on health and human rights principles would improve safety and health in the DTES and in other places.

Each of these Actions requires a strong community campaign, and the latter three, a strong provincial and national campaign as well.

Other items on the Action list are community development goals that could be implemented more easily.

In addition, DTES residents, CCAP, and other DTES groups may be able to work for this Vision through the following emerging City planning opportunities:

- Meeting with Simon Fraser University and the City to work on ways to reduce displacement of low-income residents from hotels by new students at the SFU arts school;
- Participating with the City on its social and economic impact study of Woodward's and other market housing development;
- Rezoning applications in the Historic Area;
- Rezoning of the Oppenheimer and Hastings Corridor parts of the DTES;
- Participating with the City in its newly announced strategic planning process for the DTES; and
- Monitoring hotels and rooming houses.

Even though the low-income DTES community is the majority, it is a vulnerable group which has experienced neglect, abuse and violations of human rights. As Marg Green of Community Directions said in 1999, "We must be prepared to take a stand that would put the human needs of the vulnerable members of our community first." Negotiation cannot protect a vulnerable group from a stronger one, like land owners and developers. As Green wrote, "Measures must be taken to ensure the survival of the Downtown Eastside's existing low-income community before this community can negotiate compromises."

## A HUGE THANK YOU

Thank you to each and every one of the 1,200 people who participated in CCAP's consultation process over the last two years. In particular, thanks to the Carnegie Community Centre Association for their leadership and support.

And thanks to Dave Diewert, Kerry Porth, David Lee, the Urban Core Workers, residents at the Town Hall meeting on Dec. 7, 2009, Pilar Riano Alcala, Kathy Coyne, Rose Keurdian, Savannah Walling, Terry Hunter, Joyce Rock, Sandy Cameron, Bud Osborn, Sid Chow Tan, Nick Blomley, Elvin Wyly, Ethel Whitty, Marg Green, Ray Spaxman, and Ann Livingston for their input. We hope we have incorporated it as faithfully as possible in this report.

Thanks to Murray Bush, the Blackbird, Lesa De Tree and Gena Thompson for all their technical expertise. And a big thank you to our funder, Vancity, without whom, none of the Visioning work in the last two years would have been possible.

# APPENDIX A

## Gentrification: What is it? What impact will gentrification have? What words are used to justify gentrification?

### What is gentrification?

Gentrification is a process where low-income people are replaced by richer people in a neighbourhood, and property values increase. Private developers like Concord Pacific can gentrify by buying property and building condos. Governments can gentrify by supporting projects like Woodward's where condos outnumber social housing units. City governments can use zoning and other planning rules to encourage or discourage gentrification. Gentrification is a well-documented process that has happened in hundreds of cities throughout the world.

### What impact will gentrification have on low-income DTES residents?

Without a change in direction by the city, the main impact of existing and looming city policies will be gentrification. Already in the 2005 to 2010 period new market housing is outstripping new social housing in the DTES by three to one, and is having a ripple effect on many things that low-income people need and value. The process works like this: Land prices go up. New social housing becomes more expensive to build. Business taxes go up and neighbourhood serving businesses and social agencies can't afford to serve the low-income community. Rents escalate in SROs, the housing of last resort for really poor people. Homelessness increases. Low-income people are displaced to areas that don't have the life saving services they depend on. New businesses exclude local residents with their prices and security guards. A new power structure, dominated by new residents who have more money, evolves. Some work to stop the services and affordable housing that low-income people need.

Low-income residents in social housing may not be physically evicted. But they become emotionally and financially displaced as the community hubs they depend on diminish, friends are displaced, stores become more expensive, and their "community" is replaced by a tectonic mix of richer people and poor.

### But doesn't gentrification improve neighbourhoods?

Gentrification can make a geographical location look nicer on the outside. But it doesn't help low-income residents because of the changes listed above.

### What city policies promote gentrification?

Here are some of them:

- Giving grants, tax holidays and density bonusing to owners who upgrade heritage buildings, making them more expensive;
- Supporting Woodward's and its upscale condos and stores which increase property values in neighbouring areas, with the ripple effects mentioned above;
- Providing tax incentives to chain stores at Woodward's while local low-income serving businesses are barely making it financially;
- Moving SFU to Woodward's which brings hundreds of students who may want to live in cheap SROs and use cheap services like the Carnegie cafeteria. Students deserve cheap rent and places to eat, but if they displace local residents, there will be more homelessness and hunger in the DTES;
- Allowing developers more density in the DTES with the Historic Area Height Review.

### What words are used to justify gentrification?

In the DTES and throughout the world special words are used to disguise the fact that gentrification is happening and that it is a process that is bad for people who are poor and benefits people who have money and property. "Revitalization," "balance," "social mix" and "inclusivity" are some of these nice sounding words that make gentrification seem like it will actually help people who are poor.

**Revitalization:** According to the City of Vancouver's website, "The DTES Revitalization Program is a multi-faceted approach to restoring the area to a healthy, safe and liveable neighbourhood for all." Who could object to this? Unfortunately, a big part of this "revitalization" program involves purposely introducing more market housing to the area. Most of this market housing is turning out to be condos. "Revitalization" is a nice sounding word that hides the ripple effects of gentrification mentioned in Appendix A: displacement of low-income residents and eroding of community assets.

**Balance:** At the public hearing on building supportive housing on Princess St. in 2009 several people who opposed the development talked about making the DTES a "balanced" community. In a *Vancouver Sun* newspaper article (Oct. 24, 2009) real estate "titan" Bob Rennie said "My goal is to have the less fortunate walking down

the street with the fortunate, and bring balance to the community.” “Balance” sounds like a good thing. But in the DTES context the word hides these facts:

- the “less fortunate” people will not become better housed or less impoverished or healthier because they are walking on the same streets as the “fortunate;”
- the “less fortunate” may, in fact, feel even more deprived and marginalized because of the wealth their new neighbourhood is flaunting;
- the development of condos where the “fortunate” live is pushing up land prices and has a ripple effect of pushing out the “less fortunate” who cannot pay higher rents in SROs or buy things in high end stores.

Used in this context, “balance” is a word that tries to justify a gentrification process that actually excludes the “less fortunate” and their community assets.

**Social and income mix:** CCAP has heard numerous city council members, business people and developers talk about consciously promoting a social and income mix in the DTES. They want richer people to move into the DTES to provide the social mix. And they see this happening if more condos are developed and sold. Some have the patronizing idea that if poor people are exposed to rich people their behavior will somehow change, an attitude that ignores the complexities of dealing with deep poverty, mental illness, addiction and homelessness. Others assert that the DTES would be “healthier” if it had a “social mix” or an “income mix”.

For decades academics and policy makers have assumed that it was healthier for poor people to live in mixed income neighbourhoods than in poor neighbourhoods. But, writing in *Urban Studies* (p.2451), Loretta Lees says policy makers should “sit up and take note” because of the “growing evidence” that contradicts assumptions in social mix policies. According to Lees, “The rhetoric of ‘social mix’ hides a gentrification strategy and in that a hidden social cleansing agenda.” Lees notes the irony that gentrification, which results in segregation and polarization, “is being promoted via social mix policies as the ‘positive’ solution to segregation.” “Over the longer term poor people suffer more from the loss of benefits of living in a poor neighbourhood, than they gain from living in a more affluent one,” she says. Lees calls social mix policies “cosmetic policies” that don’t deal with the “complex social, economic and cultural reasons as to why there are concentrations of poor, economically inactive people in our central cities.”

Another researcher, Paul Cheshire, writing in *International Regional Science Review*, examines several studies on social mix and concludes, “That the disadvantaged are concentrated in poor neighborhoods does not demonstrate that poor neighborhoods are a cause of disadvantage. If that is the case, the conclusion for policy is to reduce income inequality in society not build ‘mixed neighborhoods’ or improve the built environment in such neighborhoods.” Cheshire goes on to suggest, “Mixed neighborhood policies may divert attention from the need for effective income redistribution.”

Trudeau Scholar Martine August explains, “there is much evidence to suggest that politically-active residents associations often use their political influence and clout to try to push out low-income people and services that they use.” This is in contrast to the social-mix-is-good theory which says, “higher-income people will use their social capital and political influence to improve the neighbourhood for the poor, and to connect low-income people with job and educational opportunities.”

**Inclusivity:** Historically, “inclusivity” has meant that people on the margins are “included” in the mainstream. But in the DTES context, “inclusivity” is turned on its head and is being used to justify land use decisions that *exclude* low-income residents of the DTES from their own community, and its values of acceptance and empathy. “Balance,” “social mix” and “inclusion” are words being used to mask the impact of gentrification on low-income people, and to market gentrification so it seems socially acceptable.

At no time in CCAP’s consultation process did any residents suggest that having richer people in the community would help their mental illness, reduce their addiction, make them less poor, get rid of their bed bugs, or get them a decent place to live. It’s not mixing up richer and poorer people that we need to solve the area’s problems. We need to tackle the problems directly.





## APPENDIX B

### DTES Displacement Facts

Are low-income residents really being pushed out of the DTES? Here is the information that CCAP has discovered:

- **SRO rents are increasing.** According to CCAP's hotel survey about half of the privately owned SRO rooms are renting for more than low income people can afford. In addition, the number of hotels where two people are staying in one tiny room quadrupled between 2008 and 2009.
- **SRO rents are higher on the West side where condos are concentrated.** According to data from CCAP's 2009 hotel survey, East of Main only 10 hotels with about 450 rooms are renting rooms at over \$425 a month. But West of Main, 15 hotels with more than twice as many rooms (1130) are renting for over \$425.
- **City counting method doesn't give a clear picture.** City staff continually inform council that its 1 for



1 replacement policy (for every 1 SRO that is lost, a new social housing unit should be built) is being met. However, the city does not take into account rent increases that make the SROs, the last housing before homelessness, unaffordable to very low-income people. Nor is it examining the impact on low-income DTES residents of owners holding rooms vacant. And the city includes provincially owned hotels as new social housing when they are newly social but not new accommodation.

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