

CONCERNED CITIZENS OF FALSE CREEK NORTH (CCFCN)

Regarding HEAT Shelters at:

- 1435 Granville Street, Vancouver B.C.
- 1442 Howe Street, Vancouver B.C.

BACKGROUND

During an unusually cold and snowy winter, on December 9, 2008 the Mayor of Vancouver announced the creation of the Homeless Emergency Action Team initiative, aka HEAT. The HEAT terms of reference over a 90-day mandate were to identify and take immediate steps to get homeless people “off the street and into safe and secure shelters over the winter.” Chaired by Mayor Robertson and composed of 14 members including city councillors, city staff, housing stakeholders, and private sector representatives, “HEAT met almost every Sunday between December 9, 2008 and March 8, 2009.”

At NO time during those 3 months and 13 Sundays were affected neighbourhood residents and business informed, invited, or included in ANY discussions.

Regarding City Process and Permitting: “to allow the shelters to open as quickly as possible, City staff adjusted normal City approval processes. Emergency shelters usually require temporary Development Permits to operate.... usually approved by the Director of Planning after a process that includes public notification.”

City Process was waived.

And “While no neighbourhood notification process took place prior to the shelters opening, shelter operators notified neighbours once the shelters were open and provided contact numbers people could call in case issues or concerns arose.”

We have found NO evidence that any notification EVER transpired, nor been provided ANY contact numbers so our concerns & distress could be shared.

Furthermore, “In addition to waiving the need for Development Permits, the City also relaxed some requirements of the Vancouver Building Bylaw.”

What NEXT?! Read on...

Solely following our own frustrating search for information were we advised in January, 2009 that the “shelters will permanently close no later than April 30/09, if not sooner” and that they were not intended to be permanent. We then discovered the shelters would not close on April 30/09, but have been extended to the end of June 2009.

Once again, area residents were NOT consulted nor included in any process.

We have just been advised that the shelters in our area have been Approved to remain open through April 2010.

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!

It must be noted these 2 area shelters are “low-barrier access” (NOT allowed at approx. 95% of present City shelters). Low-barrier = overnight users may bring inside their shopping carts, pets, drug & alcohol addictions etc.

These shelters have been placed very near our most vulnerable young + elderly citizens:

- ½ block from Montessori Pre-School at 1500 Howe St.
- 2 blocks from Montessori Elementary School at 1351 Hornby St.
- ½ block Low-Income Seniors Residence (Granville House) at 1515 Granville St.

We are witnessing:

- A dramatic decrease in overall security within the community
- Unreported and unregulated needle exchanges
- Public crack-smoking and other drug use.
- Urination and defecation into private patios and common areas
- Increased property vandalism and graffiti
- Stashing of drug paraphernalia in flower beds and planters
- Used syringes throughout area including inside retail business washroom
- Violent assaults and muggings where Police interaction has been required
- Increased need for police response arresting individuals wanted on warrants
- Increased numbers of break and enters to private properties
- Theft of property from private patios and properties
- Increased break-ins of cars in private underground parkades
- Assaults of area residents including an elderly building manager
- Open drug transactions
- Large numbers of loiterers (especially in the alley between Howe & Granville 1400 block)
- Intimidation of area residents
- Fights and other altercations
- Late-night yelling and increased noise

The 2008-09 winter may have warranted emergency measures from the community and City.

Those conditions no longer exist.

In addressing specific issues last December, HEAT has simply concentrated the problem in a high-density residential neighbourhood. Not only has this created an unsafe environment for our community, but it has been located in an area unsuitable and inappropriate for this type of shelter and WITHOUT services in place such as public restrooms, neighbourhood police, drug/alcohol assistance centres, etc.

We demand the City and Provincial Government REVOKE approval to open these 2 area shelters beyond June 2009!

We demand the City and Provincial Government hold public consultation and follow due process and regulations!

PRINT NAME CLEARLY

ADDRESS

SIGNATURE

Thank you for your support. In addition to signing the petition, we strongly urge you to telephone and/or email local politicians and HEAT members to express your concerns. Be proactive !!!!! Email and phone often.