

Mayor and Councillors, my name is Andrew Longhurst, I am in the UBC honours geography program, specializing in urban economic geography and neighbourhood change. I am here speaking on behalf of the Coalition of Progressive Electors (COPE). COPE is opposed to this proposed rezoning.

First, COPE opposes rezonings in areas without a completed community plan. The West End is a community in which no rezonings should even be contemplated until the community planning process has been completed. COPE supports density when there is a neighbourhood plan in place, the planning process is inclusive, and actually takes the concerns of neighbourhoods seriously. The Downtown Eastside is an example of a neighbourhood which has not yet completed its local area plan and yet Vision Vancouver chose to disrespect that process by approving the redevelopment of the Pantages site, while ignoring the concerns of the neighbourhood and low-income people.

Second, COPE opposes this rezoning application because it is part of a failed rental housing policy: STIR. STIR is not the answer to affordable rental housing, rather it is subsidizing developers. This policy is not creating the truly affordable housing that we need. With 1401 Comox, the city will forego a Development Cost Levy of over \$1.4 million. What this means is that we are losing this incredibly important revenue, which can then go to provide a variety of community amenities and services, including **truly** affordable rental housing. Projected rental rates for 1401 Comox indicate that these STIR rental units are not addressing the city's lack of affordable rental housing which Vision Vancouver claims. Rather these units will cater to higher income earners, and will not even be affordable to West End residents at or below the median household income. As City Staff indicated themselves, these units are for those with 'modest incomes', yet that is code for people significantly beyond the median household income for the West End, which the city has not taken into account.

The median household income for the West End census tract, which 1401 Comox lies within, is \$38,638, again \$38,638. This is significantly below the median household income for the city of

Vancouver which is \$47,299. These are taken directly from the 2006 Census, which are the most current numbers we have. This means that 30% of household income per month for the median West End household is \$966 per month. Now I have taken the midpoint of the proposed rental rates based on the staff report to indicate these units will certainly be beyond the accepted benchmark of 30% household income which is to be spent on housing.

For an average 1401 Comox studio at \$1,034/month, the median West End household in this census tract (Census Tract 9330063.00) would pay 32% of household income on housing. For an average **one-bedroom** at \$1,296/month, the median West End household would pay **40%** of household income on housing. For an average **two-bedroom** at \$1,799 per month, the median West End household would pay **56%** of household income on housing. For an average **three-bedroom** at \$2,436 per month, the median West End household would pay **76%** of household income on housing. **That's 76% percent of household income on housing.** The message seems to be clear: these units are not affordable to the West End neighbourhood even for median income households, and if you are a senior, low-income, or a young person, you are probably completely out of luck, unless you plan to spend a majority of your income on an 'affordable' rental unit.

Vision Vancouver is opting to subsidize developers, rather than look to providing real affordable housing. And in the process, Vision's STIR policy is setting a dangerous precedent in eliminating the Development Cost Levies for STIR rental only buildings. This ultimately means a reduction in funds for community facilities, services, and **truly** affordable housing. We are ending up with the City subsidizing developers to build higher-end rentals in towers which we know are the most expensive form of construction, and in terms of sustainability, towers perform poorly over the long run. Developers, staff and Council seem to suggest that we can't achieve density without building towers. That is simply not true. Furthermore, there is no legal check in place to prevent developers from building high-end rental units through STIR. Make this a condition and don't approve rezonings and building permits, unless developers conform to the 30% affordability benchmark for households. We don't have any check in place if developers choose to jack up the

rental rates after the rezoning and development has been approved. **Where is the certainty that we are even getting what is being promised?** The 1401 Comox projected rental rates are out of the reach for low-income renters, including seniors, families, young people, and most importantly, West End residents.

In conclusion, COPE opposes this rezoning application and we urge Council to reject it. The City needs to stop subsidizing developers through the STIR program. We need a Vancouver Housing Authority with the mandate of providing affordable housing for poor people, families, seniors and young people. The policies of the current council have not provided affordable housing in the last three and a half years. Subsidizing developers does not create affordable housing. This Council will be judged on whether they come through on their commitment to make affordable housing their most important goal this term. Affordable housing is not an abstract or theoretical concept. Housing is affordable when it costs no more than 30% of household and individual income.

Sincerely,

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on behalf of the Coalition of Progressive Electors (COPE)
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