

Dear SHPOA board,

Thank you for drawing to our attention on the Zoning Review. As a result of your newsletter, I have attended the open house, initiated discussions amongst friends and in our own family. My feeling about the new zoning plan is complex.

I actually support the City's efforts in retaining the heritage characteristics of the region. I would even tolerate some drop in my property value if the Heritage Action Plan has a good chance of achieving its objectives. Let us face it, the current property values are unhealthy and unsustainable. However, the proposal as it stands places unfair burden on the existing owners to bear the economic consequences of the Action Plan. There are many concerns:

1. Maintaining old houses are expensive, and existing (and future) owners of older houses will have to bear the costs of maintenance themselves, all for the "common good" of having old character homes around
2. Point 1 above will lead to a fall in the value of older character homes, again with the owners of these homes bearing the costs exclusively
3. There will reach a time when keeping these old homes are not environmentally sensible - old homes are leaky with respect to thermal insulation, components of these homes can be impossible to find, and the use of indoor space can be completely inefficient. This flies in the face of a city council with our mayor so bent on making Vancouver "green" and environmentally responsible. Does it make sense to burn much more fossil fuel to keep very old houses around "for the looks" while keeping its inhabitants uncomfortable?
4. The proposal outlined in the City's website is complicated enough that it is impossible even for an individual with "above average" education and intelligence to fathom the potential implications, unless he/she is in the business of city design or real estate.
5. The survey available on the website is indeed methodologically flawed and tends to encourage or allow answers which are favorable to the re-zoning review.

Rather than making existing owners of these character homes bear the brunt of the economic costs of "keeping the heritage" of the city, why wouldn't the city allow more carrots? For example, owners can be rewarded to "rebuild" a new house as a close replica of the old character house, by tax incentives or other subsidies. It would keep the look of the district, but replace old energy inefficient houses with new ones. It would be much better than even allowing keepers of old houses to build accessory buildings. With many of our lots now occupied by new houses built to maximize FSR, I am also afraid that implementation of the new rules will only result in a mix of the "new" and "old" looks, without eventually achieving the objective of the original Action Plan.

Given the complexity of the proposed plan and the skewed survey on line, I end up not completing the on line survey. I am glad that the SHPOA is doing this to at least allow my opinion be heard.