

July 28, 2014

Good Evening.

Mayor, Councillors, Staff- thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak this evening.

My name is Bob Dubbert, and I co-own the property at 4420 Garden City Road, along with Shelley Dubbert. I am a lifelong Richmond resident and am currently employed as a Captain with Vancouver Fire Rescue Services, with 25 years' service. The Dubbert family were pioneers in Richmond and have lived in this area since approximately 1922. My father and 3 aunts were born and raised around the corner from us on Alexandra Road. My late Aunt Margaret purchased our current property in 1948 and had the house built that stands there today. We purchased the home in 1988 and raised our family there. Over the years, I completely renovated the interior of the house, rebuilt the garage, added fencing and landscaping, and generally improved the overall appearance and comfort of the house for my family.

Since moving into the house in 1988 we have seen a gradual, then accelerated, decline in the livability of the neighbourhood. Owners moved out and more rentals emerged in the neighbourhood, along with more crime and associated problems. Several vacant houses- at least 7 in the last 10 years, were destroyed by arson, and there have been a couple of drug lab busts in the neighbourhood as well. Transients are frequently seen in the neighbourhood, petty crime and break ins are frequent and several properties are overgrown and unkempt, attracting rats and other vermin. Police cars visiting properties in the neighbourhood is a common site. We don't have adequate sidewalks, and remain on storm sewers and septic tanks only. Other infrastructure such as cable/internet, BC Hydro lines, etc are badly outdated and in need of replacement. I've had several dealings with Hydro, Shaw and Telus over the years with service interruptions and have been repeatedly told that although the infrastructure is outdated and long overdue to be replaced, these companies will not invest any money in the area until it is redeveloped.

After a long downturn in this area, we are slowly starting to see signs of revitalization with several multifamily buildings being developed in the area, and the preconstruction of the new Central At Garden City shopping center at Alderbridge & Garden City that was approved by Council in November 2013. A new road, Dubbert Street, which is named after my family, passes in behind our property. This change to the area has been positive and well received by the areas owners, as well as most of Council and the citizens of Richmond. We are starting to see a well planned and attractive neighbourhood build up around us. Adding our area into the redevelopment that is going on around us can only add to the overall livability and quality of the entire area.

To date, the properties facing the east side of Garden City Road between Cambie Road and Alexandra Road have been left in limbo. This area incorporates several properties and owners adding up to approximately 15 acres. With the changes to the area, and a desire to downsize, we listed our property for sale in May 2012. Recently we received an offer of fair market value, but this is now on hold pending changes the City is proposing regarding the ratio of residential vs. office/retail/commercial space for the area. My understanding is the ratio of residential space versus commercial/office/retail space is proposed to be changed downward from a 70/30 ratio to a proposed 60/40 ratio. I also understand the

City has also increased the required potential employment numbers for this sector of land from 1000 to 3000 new jobs. This would seem to be a much higher rate than the rest of the West Cambie area.

With respect to the hard work of the City Planning Department and its vision for this area, I have some concerns going forward. The housing stock in this strip along Garden City is older, with almost every residence predating the 1970's. Many are in disrepair with overgrown properties. People are not tearing down and rebuilding new houses on these large lots. These properties should be allowed to be redeveloped as most of the owners, like myself, are long term owners in the area who have been waiting patiently for years to see redevelopment and improvements to the area. Redevelopment of this 15 acres would see much needed multifamily residences added, including a possible inclusion of low income and assisted living units, which are in desperate need in Richmond. Redeveloping this area would also add increased tax revenue to the City, the potential for quality, attractive and energy efficient buildings facing on to the busy Garden City corridor, and would be tied in to the City's sewer system and geothermal plant for the area. The alternative, if left as is, are a group of unsightly and decaying properties that will continue to decline. People buying and moving into new residences in the neighbourhood will likely approach the City as well to see this outdated and unsightly strip of properties redeveloped. Most likely, the demands of the residents of this area will need to be addressed again and again until the owners and residents in the area can achieve the change they wish to see happen.

Looking at a map of the area, we remain the center of the "doughnut" as redevelopment goes on all around us. Colliers has presented statistics at a recent Planning Committee meeting showing the high vacancy rates of office and commercial buildings in Richmond. Several large tenants have left Richmond in recent years, and it has been a challenge to lease out those vacant buildings. The proposal to add 1 million square feet of office and professional space at Duck Island, along with another 300,000 square feet near the Capstan Skytrain station, will take years to absorb into the market, if at all, according to the Colliers report. There is also the real potential for additional developments of this type on Vancouver airport authority lands. Who is going to occupy all of this space?

If redevelopment of our area is further delayed, we will continue to be boxed in to a small, under serviced area, with new developments all around us. Increases to traffic along an already busy Garden City Road will further complicate access and egress to our properties; there is increased noise and dust from construction, and a lower quality of life and enjoyment of the area are realities we face as owners. Allowing the owners of this affected area to redevelop their properties, with the right mix of residential included, would complete the build out of the West Cambie area and tie these properties in to City services. Most of the owners are Baby Boomers who are approaching retirement age and wish to downsize from our current larger properties. We have enjoyed living in the area and raising our families, but the changing makeup of the neighbourhood signals a time for many of us to sell and move on.

To the north of us, we will have millions of square feet of new office/commercial and retail units, along with new residential units. To the south of us will be the new Central At Garden City shopping center, and the Garden City lands, described as "the jewel of Richmond" which will offer a wide variety of outdoor green space, and potentially much needed sports and cultural facilities for a growing Richmond population. To leave us in the middle as an isolated, rundown and underdeveloped island begs another look at the proposed land use mix for our area. In talking with other owners in the neighbourhood, realtors, and the people here tonight in the gallery, I think we are pretty much united and unanimous to see changes to our area sooner rather than later.

It is my view that if Council can reconsider the ratio of housing and increase the component as outlined, everyone can get something they need and want from this area with the result being a much improved neighbourhood for all that will live, work, and do business there.

I am a proud union member, and also a believer in free enterprise in the marketplace. The right component and type of residential units, along with the right mix of non-residential component, are ultimately determined by what the market wants and needs. A well thought out redevelopment will meet the needs of the owners, and the City and its residents and businesses now. To further delay redevelopment and improvements to our neighbourhood would not be fair to the owners who have been waiting many years for this to happen. Tonight we all have a chance to be part of a solution to this dilemma and move this neighbourhood forward.

Thank You very much.