

Richmond Planning Committee, Tuesday, September 17, 2013

Jim Wright, President, Garden City Conservation Society, on Item 1, the  
development known as the Walmart mall

*Councillor McNelly*

~~Mayor Brodie~~ and all of our council members,

I've talked with you before about the Walmart mall area and conservation of *nature*. This time, let's focus on our *human* conservation, including physical, mental and social wellness.

Let's apply the Pareto principle, the 80/20 rule — like this: If we focus on ensuring that our actions are helping, not hurting, the wellness of the *least* privileged 20% of us, the benefits will also flow to the rest of us (and our tourist guests) with just a little more effort. I've thought about that enough with regard to the *Garden City Lands* to be confident it's true.

And it's true for the *Walmart* lands, which are visually and conceptually part of the Garden City Lands *area* (which also extends to the arterial roads and City Centre neighborhoods around the Lands). Realize here, by the way, that people increasingly use the phrase *Garden City Lands* to refer to an area, not just the one, two or three lots that make up our central park.

When we look north from the Garden City Lands entrance, the berm along Alderbridge makes the natural panoramic viewscape *continuous* despite Alderbridge Way. At the *Ideas Fair* this summer, Yvonne Stich kindly set me up with a table facing that way. One visitor after another asked me where Walmart would be, and I showed them the long grey mound of sand. Many were horrified, and none liked the idea, but the point here is that they typically saw it as *on* the Garden City Lands (as it visually *is*).

In any case, one Richmond feature that is *definitely* world class is the natural viewscape from the *area*. By good fortune, that natural legacy is close to much of the *less* privileged 20% of our community.

Thanks to *Vancouver Sun* mapping of median income levels in Metro Vancouver, we know about Richmond City Centre neighborhoods in the *bottom* income group. The Downtown East Side is even lower in that group, but we have the *largest* low-income area.

I've talked with poverty-response advocates on Garden City Lands tours, and they give high importance to the *wellness values* of the lands,

especially as a park where the less-privileged can enjoy a walk for physical and mental wellness and pause to chat with anyone as equals for social wellness. If all of us, now and a century from now, still have the wonderful legacy setting with its world-class views, that will help a lot.

It's crucial to act *now*. I've studied the Walmart mall staff report, and *in effect* it dismisses the concerns about the elimination of nature on the north side of Alderbridge, even the remnant bordering Alderbridge that is supposedly still protected as ESA. When I met with Terry Crowe last year, he told me the ESA designation in place when the application began would still apply. *So let's apply it.* I'd like a *wide* natural corridor, but a 20-metre strip with restoration of the mixed urban forest could be enough if done well.

Although the staff report *touches on* the concerns, there's no substance at all. We're trying to conserve Richmond one step at a time, and that requires *real action* with *substance*.

In this Walmart mall context, please give priority to the wildlife corridor, with the views from the Garden City Lands that go with it. If it's a step the developer *must* address *first*, that will respect the *least* privileged of us—with impact for the whole community.

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Note: *Vancouver Sun* interactive map of median household incomes by Metro Vancouver neighbourhoods: