

City Council Package - Steveston Laneways

Overview

Chris Back - Richmond Street

I'm sure everyone is aware of why we are here, but in short, the sewer system behind our homes on Richmond St and Broadway St between No. 1 Rd and 3rd Ave has failed and needs to be replaced. This land is owned by the City and they are planning to implement an extensive back lane development initiative across a significant sector of this neighbourhood and community. We also want to be clear that we are separating the sewer replacement from this discussion and we ask you to do the same. We have no issues with the sewer being replaced and the work that is currently going on to do so. We recognize the need for this work.

We seek to address Mayor and Council regarding the laneway development; on what we see is a significant erosion of the fundamental structure and livability of our community. You will hear from six of us today, outlining different issues, but with one consistent ask - please put a moratorium on the laneway development until the City has fully consulted with our community.

We all recognize and celebrate Steveston as a Historic Fishing Village and a huge part of the rich history of the west coast fishing industry, an iconic set for many Hollywood movies and TV shows, a vibrant and healthy desirable place to live, and an important nationally recognized historic community. It is also a place where people reside in a safe and walkable community where neighbours interact, and is fundamentally a very special place to live in close proximity to nature, at the doorstep to one of Canada's major cities.

What the City is proposing is set to fundamentally change and transform that inherent structure, fabric, character and livability of this area in a very negative way.

It follows no higher purpose, nor does it follow any principles that one could find in planning livable cities in Canada or any other jurisdiction. It does not serve to mold the future of our community to the benefit of those of us who live here to make it safer, sustainable or livable.

Your Official Community Plan is intended to reflect the overall values of the community, a vision for the future of our city. The goals for Steveston are to create a vibrant community, conserving heritage character and landscapes, conserving and enhancing the natural environment, and protecting residential character. None of this is reflective of this back lane development.

This initiative conflicts with your Ecological Network approach that recognizes the importance of natural areas including backyards that support habitat for birds and wildlife, reduce the need for artificial runoff, and promote food production in a healthy community.

Your Service objectives for improvement in a cost effective and environmentally sound way also fall short of this action, as these back lanes increase water runoff, inhibit infiltration, add additional capital expenditure costs, as well as long term maintenance and life cycle costs that are currently not required, as the residents are willingly carrying the burden of these costs.

Your strict bylaws have policies and initiatives relating to things such as tree protection and environmental protection, yet your back lane construction is removing massive trees and significant green areas that address greenhouse gas emissions addressing Bill 27 targets.

This plan also conflicts with the Sustainability Framework adopted by the City in 2010. We recognize our fragile and important island ecosystem yet erode the fundamentals that create it, by taking out green space and replacing it with heat absorbing asphalt.

Schedule 1 to the Minutes of the Regular meeting of Richmond City Council held on Monday, November 27, 2017.

Back lane transportation and infrastructure planning creates a vehicle centric additional road network promoting GHG emissions and increasing carbon footprint and global warming. It runs contrary to planning efforts to reduce vehicular priority and moves toward car share and alternate forms of commuting. It impacts a pedestrian program to improve the safety and environment for the pedestrian.

The shape of our community effects every part of our daily lives and the health and wellbeing of those of us who live here. Fundamental changes to the fabric of a city are massively detrimental when they erode green space, segment housing areas, divide neighbours, introduce traffic congestion and safety issues, and damage the environment.

We would suggest that there is a better way to construct communities that involve consultation, alternate schemes, and visionary thinking. In fact, your Official Community Plan specifies the need for community consultation in times like these, something that has not yet occurred regarding laneways in Steveston.

Your back lane construction initiative that you have triggered does nothing for our community, and we have yet to hear a logical reason from the City as to why this is going ahead.

1. City Engineering has confirmed that they do not require laneway access for servicing the sewer system
2. We already have 7 streets running east/west between Steveston Hwy and Chatham, so we do not need additional laneways running in the same direction to improve traffic flow or improve pedestrian or cyclist access - in fact, having lanes exiting onto No. 1 Rd significantly impacts the safety of all of those around us
3. Your Official Community Plan does not suggest laneway development in our area of Steveston - this is very clearly depicted in the lane network map on page 101 and the arterial road housing development map on page 93 of the OCP.
 - And even if it did, the OCP states on multiple pages that the City must “Consider community values and input when implementing the OCP”
 - It also states to “Use a variety of traditional and innovative approaches for consulting with and involving members of the public in community activities and planning processes”

You are going to hear from a group of residents today. Each of them will outline further details as to why we feel lane development throughout our area of Steveston is unnecessary, will cost millions of dollars to taxpayers, and is illogical. You will hear the passion that we have about this issue as we seek an opportunity to be heard, before the City comes in and completely changes our community.

Again, the issue here is what happens after the sewer work is complete. We ask that minimize the damage to the environment while fixing the sewer and then put a moratorium on the development of the laneway until you have consulted with our area of Steveston. This is not only about the 36 homes directly impacted by the current laneway development; it is about the 800 or so homes in our area of Steveston whom this will impact as all sewers are replaced in the near future.

To quote Joni Mitchell “You’re Paving Paradise to Put up a Parking lot”.

Livability

My name is Karen Smith and I live on Richmond Street. I have lived in Richmond for my entire life and couldn’t imagine living anywhere else. I wanted to speak about the impact the development of new laneways will have on the livability of this particular area of Steveston. I believe new laneways will bring several negative impacts to the community with no tangible benefits.

People have moved into our area because of its uniqueness. It's not like a subdivision and it's not like the city city centre. I personally moved here because of the unique character in this particular area of Steveston. The majority of lots here are some of the smallest in Richmond at 33' x 110'. If the new lane is put in, these small lots will be flanked by asphalt on both the front and the back. The city has approved and continues to approve home construction with garages in the front and bedrooms in the rear. The homes are set back on the property leaving long front driveways. These residences have been designed in a way that it will be impossible to put in a garage off the lane even if we wanted to. Many of these homes are not likely to be redeveloped within the next 40-50 years. So the new lane will not be used for garages or vehicles in these cases.

I previously lived in a home with a laneway in this area of Steveston on Hunt Street. I personally witnessed nuisance crimes such as graffiti on the fences, drug use, and garbage dumping...things that are not reported to the police. Other issues arose from having our bedroom back onto the laneway. There was noise from drunk people walking home at night or continuing their party in the back lane. I am concerned that these issues will be the same or worse for the potential new lane as we are now even closer to the village centre pubs and restaurants. I can only try to imagine what the lane will look like on or after the busy Canada Day weekend.

There are serious concerns regarding traffic safety. This proposed new lane would intersect with a busy area of No 1 Road at one end and a dedicated bike lane on Second Ave at the other end. This creates unnecessary safety hazards for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles. There is no way that the families in this area would feel safe allowing their children to play in this proposed lane.

If the city took the time to come and consult with the the residents they would also hear that parents and families are here because the yards provide security for their children to play freely. Front yards, especially without curbs or sidewalks do not provide that option. Lanes will displace families from their own back yards to public parks that are already very busy with families from the nearby condos and townhouses. Adding lanes will lessen livability by removing green space that has been there for residents to use for 70 or so years and it will be replaced, by asphalt, pollution, garbage, traffic, exhaust, and noise - all in a space that most us rely on to unwind and recuperate. We have been struggling trying to figure out how the lane benefits the community. It would be great to understand why the lane is needed. There has been no real communication or consultation in this regard.

Furthermore, although our yards were not that big to begin with, at least they were all adjoining. So in actual fact, we were surrounded by a pretty big area of contiguous green space, unbroken except for fences. Right now the sounds we hear are those of children playing or families gathering. It really does feel like a special place, a place where you can forget you are in a heavily paved city. It's special and we value it. A lane would wipe out that feeling and we will be separated into little boxes with postage stamp yards, circumscribed by asphalt.

In the Steveston Area Plan portion of the Official Community Plan in the Neighbourhood and Housing section there appears to be a clear distinction between new development projects and existing residential housing. The document says 'With all the potential growth in Steveston, the nature and character of the existing residential areas must be protected'. Adding lanes does not seem consistent with protecting the nature and character of this special residential area. To be clear, we are not against lanes in general, we are against lanes in our area as they derive no benefit.

I would like you to take a moment to focus on the photos being shown. The photos illustrate a number of things including how close the rear of homes (especially bedrooms) are to the proposed lane and the amount of usable/livable green space that would have to be removed to install a lane.

There are also photos of how the land has been used and enjoyed by the residents for many, many years contrasted against some of the existing lanes in the Steveston area.

I would like to conclude by requesting that a moratorium be placed on the installation of the new lane and time be taken to complete a full public consultation regarding future lane development in this special area of Steveston.

Environmental Impact

My name is Tim Major, I live on Pleasant Street, with two children 8 and 3. Currently Pleasant St. isn't directly impacted by the laneway construction but as this news moves quickly door-to-door, throughout our community, I found myself asking "Why".

Part of the uniqueness of our community is it's walkable outdoor living space and our appreciation for the special eco-system at our door step. The proposed laneway is environmentally problematic due the dramatic reduction in green space.

Green space is of tremendous value for it's reduction to GHG. Healthy lawns neutralize carbon emissions. One Avg. lawn can neutralize the emissions of a standard car driving a distance of 600 km. Lawns have 10 times the benefit of a tree due to it's density and rate of growth. Basically you can grow more, faster, and have a greater impact on carbon emissions.

The current 36 lots directly impacted will lose 10% of their total size, all of which is green space. Approximately 12,000 sq. ft. of turf grass and vegetation lost between No. 1 Rd and 2nd Avenue alone. Roughly extrapolating this across our community results in 6 acres of green space, or the equivalent of 5 football fields, lost to asphalt. This equates to removing approx. 55,000 pure liters of oxygen from the air each day or what 100 people would consume daily.

Why are we making this sacrifice and removing so much beneficial green space?

Not only are greenhouse gas emissions effected in the current direction but also the impact to our community in the case of floods or storm water run-off.

Richmond is considered a location that is apt for flooding in the coming decades. This concerns me. Richmond get's 44 inches of rain per year. What happens when the 100 year flood hits? Roads, parking lots, sidewalks, pavements, along with asphalt, concrete, brick, stone, and other building materials, combine to create impervious surfaces that resist the natural absorption of water. Cities flood not because of water accumulation but due to the lack of places for it to go. The Atlantic Magazine, and many more sources, noted that excessive paving and hardscaping were major factors in the recent Hurricane and subsequent flooding in Houston Texas. We need to ensure this can't happen in our community.

I am a 12 year resident of Richmond and have become proud to call this city home for it's green initiatives of waste diversion with curbside green carts, creation of walkable green space along Railway, and community gardens to name a few.

When I first read, the OCP vision for 2041, one item that stood out was that Richmond understood it's not enough to "do less harm" and valued "Carbon Sequestration - "...protect and enhance Richmond's natural environments to support carbon retention as well as other important ecosystem service" and "Councils endorsement of a 10% energy reduction of 2007 levels by 2020". Will we achieve these objectives by removing 5 footballs fields of grass and replacing it with asphalt?

Asphalt is intended solely for car use. This is rapidly changing. We are moving towards a sharing economy (car2go, modo, evo, Mobi bikes) and in short-order Uber and Lyft. Why are we building long-term infrastructure when fewer vehicles are the future?

These are only a few points on the environment, each of which will have dramatic impact on our community. Isn't this worth a conversation?

We are asking for a moratorium on the decision to construct a laneway until a consultation is undertaken based on the needs of our unique community.

Cost Benefit

See separate attachment

Contradictions with the Official Community Plan

Rob Hulyk - I live at 3771 Broadway St with my wife and 10 year old daughter. We have lived on Broadway street for 16 years, and my home is approximately 20 years old.

I for one do not envy Council at times like this. There are certainly no shortages of opinions about Steveston Village - which I think is a reminder that we are lucky to call Steveston and Richmond home.

Clearly we support the City and staff in fixing the acute problem with our sewer system. It would also not come as a surprise to us that there may be other sewer problems elsewhere in the village.

That in a nutshell is what I asked to speak tonight and my first question. If we are simply the first in line, is this also the vision for all of Steveston Village and do the residents know about this? If the last couple weeks are any indication, I would suggest many residents of the village are completely unaware of the long term vision of creating laneways across the entire village.

Now ignorance is never an excuse, but in fairness most people do not wake up in the morning and ask themselves "I wonder what is going on in the official community plan under sections 3, 8 and 9.2.5?" Obviously this has become more important to us in recent weeks.

So what I would like to do is to outline what we see as are some of the questions and somewhat contradictory points that seem to occur in the plans and recent decision to build a laneway.

For example, the Official Community Plan declares that we should manage traffic flow and enhance neighbourhood livability by requiring lanes parallel to major roads. This laneway is clearly not parallel and in fact goes right onto No. 1 Road. I am actually nervous thinking about any car or cyclist trying a left turn onto 1 road from this location.

Another goal expressed in the OCP's is better managing traffic and reducing conflicting traffic volume entering and exiting neighbourhoods. There are already 7 perpendicular roads running west off of No. 1 Rd between Steveston highway and Chatham. Contrast that with only 2 perpendicular roads between Steveston Hwy and Williams and 2 between Williams and Francis.

So we already have three times the westward access of other areas of similar size. So what problem are we exactly solving with a laneway by adding more east/west routes in this area? Does the data on traffic volume suggest this is in fact needed?

That leads me to my second question - how does this decision stack up against other priorities for the neighbourhood? Given the potential cost and resources potentially involved, what are we choosing

not to do in our neighbourhood or city in order to build these laneways? And is the opportunity cost worth it and demonstrable?

For context - my home like many is far back on the lot with the garage in the front. My yard will only be reduced in size by about 5 feet or so which we acknowledge given it was city land already. However, based on the stake in my yard the new fence-line will only be 20 feet from the back of my house. The simple fact is that there is no garage going there anytime soon.

In contrast to how close we are to the fence line in the back - almost all of us also have 60 feet or more of lawns, driveways and asphalt in front of our homes. 40 feet of that is also city land which we are required to care for and do so without complaint. In fact of the 37 homes on Richmond and Broadway streets between No. 1 Rd and 2nd Ave., 33 of them are in this position with the parking and garages in the front. Many of these homes, like my two neighbours to the west are brand new with no chance of any garage or reconstruction for likely decades.

So is it any wonder why we are concerned about adding a 6 meter wide lane behind us which many of us will never use? Again what problem are we solving?

More importantly why is that the priority to spend time and money on when we don't even have sidewalks anywhere in the front running from east to west? If livability and safety are in fact a priority in the plan - why is the lane able to be created so quickly and not sidewalks so my daughter has a safer walk to Lord Byng each day?

Which leads me to my last point. Given the potential cost and impact on our community in the short and long term, is it not worth a pause so that residents fully understand what the future will look like and have an opportunity for consultation?

Whether the answer is a green belt, or community gardens or other options in that space - there simply has to be a better answer to this situation than adding more cost and asphalt to the village at the cost of other options. It comes back again to the key question about the laneway which is simply why are we doing this?

Council correctly showed foresight and strategic thinking in looking at its heritage and street planning over the last several years. That process provided residents with visual concepts and was open to feedback.

I would simply ask for the same to occur here. There is simply no rush here beyond fixing the sewer line which is why we are asking for the pause on the laneway construction. This in fact has given us an opportunity for a discussion about this type of space in our village. In conclusion I would simply ask for consideration of three things.

First - provide Steveston Village residents with updated information about the vision for Steveston Village north of Chatham, and do it in a collaborative manner as you have in the past.

Second - put the visuals and diagrams up about what it could look like now and years from now for both the front and back of our homes so the residents of Steveston are fully informed.

Lastly - give residents a chance to give feedback and let's see what ideas we can generate.

Conclusion and request for Full Public Consultation

My name is Vito Albanese and I live at 3888 Richmond St. and my home is one of the properties directly impacted by the current lane development. Firstly, I want to thank the Mayor and Council for allowing our group to present to you today. I am the final speaker.

I want to thank my fellow neighbours as I've never seen an issue galvanize a community so quickly, even those not currently impacted. This has happened because of a unilaterally imposed back lane development initiative that will impact a significant portion of our community and will fundamentally change the character and livability in a very negative way.

Although many of us have been impacted personally, this is not about us but about the negative impacts of lanes to our community as they will change the natural look of the community and health and wellbeing of those of us who live here.

The group has outlined many of the reasons why this lane development just doesn't make sense:

- Times are changing and the long term need for vehicles and supporting infrastructure is diminishing
- There is a negative impact to the environment and is decreasing our green space
- There is increased safety risks for pedestrians, cyclists, vehicles and children especially on an ally that intersects at #1 Rd.
- It creates another access point for criminal activity, including a place for drug use, garbage, noise, graffiti, traffic, and exhaust
- The city is in contradiction of its own Official Community Plan which has a focus on public consultation
- The current lane being developed is not consistent with the intent of the 2000 Lane Policy
- The plan ignores the The Sustainability Framework adopted by the City in 2010. Taking out green space and replacing it with heat generating asphalt
- We are spending taxpayer money on lanes when our area still has ditches and no sidewalks or curbs
- The decision ignores the uniqueness of the area that has small narrow lots. Adding more asphalt and removing green space is illogical
- We are using a significant amount of taxpayer money to build a lane that will provide no benefit to the community
- And, there is overwhelming community opposition to lanes in our area, not only by the people who are currently being impacted but by others that will be impacted over time.

We are asking for public consultation as outlined in the Official Community Plan on page 1-6 where it talks about goals of the OCP. Goal # 2 is titled 'Connected and Accessible'. It says, 'People are connected to and interact with each other. Places, buildings, and activities are connected and easily accessed by everyone. Decisions with respect to housing, business development, parks, recreation, transportation and community access, including street design (the public realm) and repair will be made with public consultation.'

On page 13-2 of the OCP it talks about policies. Specifically 13.1.2 is titled 'Community Values and Consultation'. Objective #1 is to consider community values and input in implementing the OCP.

We believe that going ahead with the lane is against the intent of the OCP as it relates to public consultation. It also goes against the OCP with respect to a developing a livable green community.

The lane and the sewer repair are mutually exclusive issues. The sewer needs to be replaced. The lane needs proper public consultation.

When changes were being considered under the OCP for the areas of Burkeville, Edgemere and Richmond Gardens, there was extensive consultations with the residents of those areas. These are outlined in the 2011 - 2041 OCP Third Round Consultation Findings. Why didn't it happen in our case?

In our situation this only came to our attention two and a half weeks ago by a hand delivered letter dated November 7th. The letter advised that the sewer had failed and as part of the project the City will also be putting in a paved laneway. The City held two open houses within days of the letter in which residents were told, not consulted, about what was happening. The letter was in English so some residents couldn't read or understand it. In addition, letters only went to our block and not the rest of the area. At the sessions nobody was able to explain why this was happening and that if we had questions we needed to contact City Hall. Crews were on site the next business day, meaning crews were onsite within a week of us getting the initial letter! I hope you can appreciate why people are so upset. We have been doing our best to communicate with the residents in this short time the best that we can. Awareness and concern is growing and support continues to grow.

We would like to work with the City to come up with other reasonable solutions. An asphalt lane is probably the worst possible solution for the community.

We are not asking for public consultation with respect to lane design or features. What we are asking for a moratorium on building the new lane and all lanes in our area until a formal public consultation process has been completed.

You really need to see what's going on in person. You would quickly realize that it just doesn't make sense. We are inviting the City decision makers to do a walk around the community with us.

Additional attachments:

1. Cost Benefit analysis - Kent Goodhew
2. Powerpoint slides from speakers

Dollar Costing, Utility and Benefit Discussion for Proposed Laneway

Good evening my name is Kent Goodhew, my wife and our four children live at 3811 Broadway St. Our concern is not regarding the construction for repair but that of the proposed paved laneway that the City is proposing once construction is complete. This is why I have requested to speak here this evening, in order to voice our concern and the concern of others regarding the implementation of a paved laneway that no one wants or needs.

Thus, my pressing question to the mayor and council is two fold: Why has the city decided unilaterally to implement a paved laneway now? Secondly, if this is part of a larger, higher purpose plan for the area why has the city not communicated this plan and more specifically not provided the tax paying residents a venue for consultation and feedback? Transparency, ladies and gentlemen is the life blood of good governance as well as being the key to winning the hearts and minds of constituents. The decision dictated to us thus far has failed in that regard entirely.

My friends and neighbours and I have come here this evening and waited patiently to express our disappointment, frustration and concern regarding that failing. It is our profoundest hope that together, through cooperation and transparency that we can come to an arrangement that will benefit all stake holders while creating an improved neighbourhood – leaving it better than we found it and making it better than it was. *and by the way, it was already pretty darn good.

As I understand it, in 1989 the city had documented and implemented right of ways corresponding to sewer connections and other key infrastructure throughout Steveston. This was explained to me by me realtor in 2004 when I purchased my home, as a city easement of 10' along the rear border of our yard. They explained that is was city property, and it was there in case the city chose to put in a laneway. They went on to say “if they haven’t done it by now, I can’t imagine them doing it in the future.” Well here we are, 13 years later, trying to imagine why.

I would like the mayor and council to reflect upon the following points as we move forward together on this project.

When the city conceded the use of this land to the property owners they, inadvertently, created a highly efficient and amazingly beneficial symbiotic relationship. Specifically;

- The city transferred the costs of maintenance, repair and upkeep from tax payers to the property owners thus saving thousands and thousands of dollars every year which continued over the course of 28 years or nearly 3 decades. Let’s assume conservatively that the city would have spent \$10,000 (1989 dollars) annually maintaining, repairing, pruning, mowing and otherwise managing these lands. The property owners have thus

saved tax payers over \$500,000 (adjusted from 1989 dollars) over this period, I suspect it's actually much more.

- Additionally, the city avoided any costs for beautification and passed these costs onto the property owners during this period as well. Clearly the property owners were up to the task because you can see in our small sample of these lands an amazing variety of trees, including Fig, Palm, Banana and Beech. So this model has provided monumental gains in efficiency by having the owners care for these lands. All the stake holders are benefactors here. The tax payers save taxes as the city saves costs, the owners benefit by enjoying and tending beautiful neighbourhoods the community benefits by all these facts and the environment benefits the most. This would be a win win win win. There is no alternate plan that could provide as much benefit to the constituents and community of Steveston. So again the question arises..... Why?
- Other items I would like to note for your consideration are

The very expensive and unwanted burden on tax payers of implementing a paved laneway that no one wants, and no one wants to pay for is conservatively estimated to be \$573,000 for this one block alone. This does not account for additional items like speed bumps, warning signs, parking signs, lighting, painting, maintenance etc. etc.
[\$600/m x 955m] \$600/sq m laneway 5m wide by 191m (627 ft)

- Lastly using the 1989 base price of \$60,000 for a 120 x 33 lot the 'marginal value' of these lands when conceded to the owners would be \$4,950 (\$15 x 330sq ft)
[\$60,000/3,960 Sq feet = \$15/sq foot]

The same land today that the city proposes on retracting would be \$100,000 per individual household or combined for this one block the city is proposing on annexing \$3.8M of greenspace in order to pave it. (Based on a 33 x 120 lot sold for \$1.2 M or \$303 per sq ft.) [330sq ft x \$303sq ft]

In summary, after deferring all associated costs of ownership, and literally abandoning these lands for nearly 30 years, the City now wants to repossess these lands, which have a real value to the constituents of over \$3.8M. The purpose of which is not to improve the lands but to destroy them by cutting and paving them. This is not improving our community, nor enriching it, nor providing benefit of any kind. So, why Mr. Mayor, why is this the course you wish to plot?

Kent Goodhew

3811 Broadway St.