

**Subject: Senior Housing project in the 100 Block West Queens Road - here we go again.**

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**From:** "Ernie Crist" <ernie\_crist@dnv.org>

**To:** "FONVCA \ (E-mail)" <fonvca@fonvca.org>, <Cagebc@yahoo.com>

**CC:** "Mayor and Council - DNV" <Council@dnv.org>, "Senior Management Committee" <managecomm@dnv.org>

A MESSAGE FROM ERNIE CRIST

There may be an element of "nimbi's" but, in the main opposition against the proposed Seniors' Development in the 100 Block W. Queens Road as in other areas of the District is not so much because neighborhoods are against seniors housing but because designs, as a rule, are poor and intrusive.

On hand many seniors in the District have reached a stage where they are looking for accommodations more suitable to their needs in familiar surroundings but, on the other hand, many projects are like the proverbial round peg in a square hole. Town house or multi family developments as most of them are, rather than enhancing neighborhoods, destroy their ambience. Apart from increased traffic and parking problems, poor design is the most common objection. The developers with some justification claim that to make the development pay they have to maximize the space. This they do, usually at the expense of good taste.

A municipal land assembly program including for seniors housing is used in by many progressive municipalities as a way out of this dilemma. It is a modern and powerful tool to produce a better product and avoid confrontations. For the municipality to buy land, rezone, stipulate design in line with neighborhood guidelines and sell the land back to the developers and even share in the profits can eliminate many of the objections.

Instead of becoming divided, neighborhoods actually participate in planning and become part of the solution. It widens the options. And it is not only advisable for seniors housing. It is comprehensive planning rather than ad hoc as is the case not only on Queens Road but in many other areas in the District as well. It also opens the way for neighborhoods to obtain amenities at no cost. If this method had been used in the redevelopment of Lynn Valley the District, by way of example, instead of being in the hole to the tune of \$2 million dollars for the cost of the infrastructure, the municipality would have received at least some amenities. As it is, other than more noise, more pollution, more traffic, more parking problems and a bill to the tune of \$ 2 million dollars to pay for the cost of the infrastructure the Municipality got nothing.

The District with its land holdings and its Heritage Fund (even though it has squandered most of it) is in a unique position to use this asset to influence development. In its absence there is the usual hand ringing and posturing during Council debate. Much time and money is wasted in the process and a great deal of agonizing takes place before development usually goes ahead anyway, usually at the expense of neighborhoods.

On countless occasions I have proposed that we use our land resources towards that end but without success. In many cases I did not even get a seconder for my motions. As it is, the neighborhood on Queens Road more than likely will end up the same way notwithstanding all the hullabaloo and deferrals of the project to various committees. The neighborhood will be yet another victim of this lack of leadership by District Council, but not before there will be yet another round of weeping and lamenting, that this is the best we can do.

Ernie Crist



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