

 **BCAL BROOKVIEW COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION LTD.**

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Greetings from the President

Hello Neighbours,

It has now been almost four months since the City of Edmonton announced its “Neighbourhood First-time Homebuyers Program” and I have been asked by our volunteer board of the Brookview Homeowners' Association to let our community know what steps we have taken to ensure that our community’s voice is heard and that the City of Edmonton honours its stated objective of providing our community with “*a substantial opportunity to be part of the process.*”

For the benefit of those of you in our community who may not be aware of this matter, the City of Edmonton’s “Neighbourhood First-time Homebuyers Program will convert 20 surplus school sites in neighbourhoods across the city into locations for new home construction.” Back in November, 2006, the Alberta Government by an Order in Council (which is granted without any debate in the legislature) allowed the City of Edmonton to complete the rezoning on all the sites at one hearing without public hearings. This required unanimity of Council which was not achieved at their first meeting on November 28th, 2006 but the required majority was achieved at its subsequent council meeting on December 12th 2006. All necessary Bylaws received third reading on December 12th and were passed and signed.

Our Brookview community is directly impacted as we have a surplus school site on the corner of Bulyea Road and Buchanan Drive – the area currently used for our mini-soccer fields. This particular area was previously designated for a catholic elementary school but has now been declared surplus by the Edmonton Catholic School Board and is included in this program.

In its press release of November 23, 2006, the City maintained that “*The project will impact the school building portion of the land only, and will also preserve green space as park space for communities.*” Given the standard size of “the school building” we have been told up to 17 new homes can be built in this specific site. The City of Edmonton has already rezoned not only this specific site but also the entire block east to Terwillegar Drive in order to accommodate the possible relocation of the building site.

An editorial was published in the Edmonton Journal entitled “*Kudos to Mandel for housing plan*” and this prompted me to write a Letter to the Editor which was published

in the December 3, 2006 edition. As President of the Brookview Community Association Ltd., I was then asked by our Board to correspond with each Councilor individually and with Mayor Mandel to ask that they seriously consider whether it is appropriate to pass third reading of the bylaws and related resolutions without a public hearing. This letter was delivered on December 4th 2006 but, as I have noted above, the bylaws received third reading on December 12th with only Councillors Nickel and Anderson voting against this motion. To date, no Councillor has responded to my letter although I received a response from Mayor Mandel by email on December 21, 2006 in which he states the following:

Dear Mr. Amelio:

Thanks for taking the time to provide me with some feedback on the Neighbourhood First Time Homebuyer Program on behalf of the Brookview Community Association Ltd.

This is a program which allows us to address some critical problems in our community. We have an urgent need for more housing; we have a market that is increasingly priced out of reach for first-time buyers and we have a tremendous challenge in dealing with costs associated with growth in our city.

The program addresses all of these issues while only using the school building site which was always supposed to be built on.

I appreciate the concerns as to the process followed on this program, but I believe this program was worthy of the exemption it received.

While I understand the process concerns, communities will still have a substantial opportunity to be part of the process through discussions on site organization and housing design. It is everyone's intention to ensure this is a successful program that will add to the vibrancy of our communities – we are all very motivated to prove the worth of this effort.

It is my sincere hope that once communities see the process unfold, initially through a pilot process, any lingering concerns will be alleviated.

Please don't hesitate to contact me with further concerns.

Stephen Mandel
Mayor

The position of the Brookview Community Association Ltd. remains that adequate public hearings must be put in place to ensure neighbourhoods have a voice in the actual development and not simply involved in the design process. Neighbourhood structure plans are designed for each of the specific neighbourhoods and, if they are to be amended, they must do so only after public hearings and not simply because it is politically expedient or popular to address a current need.

We understand the significance of this issue and we understand the need to develop effective plans given the urgent need for more housing. However, it is such very “significance” and “need” that requires a proper process and an effective voice in the development. We believe the specific issues of each community such as neighbourhood

density and traffic flows must be considered and must involve input of our neighbours. This is not simply a reaction (as has been erroneously presented in the press) about not wanting such housing in our neighbourhood but a genuine concern for the issues which such construction can create in Brookview.

Since this First-time Homebuyers Program was announced, members of our Board including Harold Hornig, Dan Check, John Anderson and myself have attended every public meeting we have been aware of, including City Council meetings, so that our community's voice is heard.

On its website the City of Edmonton has stated that it "has begun work on the next phase of the program. Over the upcoming months the following four issues will be addressed:

1. Development and construction program details
2. Eligibility criteria and details on a second mortgage (or similar) program
3. Physical assessment of site opportunities and constraints
4. Finalizing an agreement with school boards on sharing of proceeds."

We will continue to be diligent in our efforts and do all that we can to ensure that our community's voice continues to be heard. We welcome your input and involvement. We have setup a website for a discussion forum as a link from our www.brookview.ca website. Please note, you will have to register the first time and you must put in your email address.

Sincerely,

Sam Amelio,
President