

TEAM REUNION Vancouver - May 2nd 2010.

Ray Spaxman will make a presentation to the reunion based on these notes.

(Ray was Director of Planning, Subdivision Approving Officer, Chair of the Development Permit Board and member of the Urban Design Panel for over 15 years, from 1973 to 1989. He served many councils, four mayors and attended thousands of meetings including many hundreds of public meetings. Since 1989, Ray has been in private practice as a planner and urban designer. He spent 30 years in public service, and the last 20 years in private practice)

INTRODUCTION

Thank you - I am so honoured that you have asked me to address the reunion of an organization that has had so much positive impact on our wonderful city.

I have been asked to make some observations about the last 40 years and the impacts that TEAM has had on our city. As these come from the perspective of an urban planner they can only be a reflection on part of the TEAM Legacy. I hope that someone will soon document the full story, for, in municipal politics, it is remarkable.

I will describe my impressions in four parts:

- 1 What was the scene when I arrived in 1973?
- 2 What were the results of TEAM's Planning Policies?
- 3 Where are we now? and
- 4 What should we be doing?

What I observed when I arrived in 1973

Because of the emerging problems through the 60's and into the 70's a **sea change** in municipal government processes and policies was needed and was eventually recognized and articulated through the creative wisdom of a group of like-minded and principled leaders.

During the 1960's, In Toronto and Vancouver, citizens were becoming increasingly uncomfortable with poorly conceived development, lack of openness and transparency in government procedures, inadequate attention to social, community and cultural issues and lack of involvement of communities in determining their own futures.

In both cities, reform minded people from all walks of life were coming together to oust the old guard. This happened in the early 70's with the election of Mayor Crombie and his reformists in Toronto and Mayor Phillips and TEAM in Vancouver.

Enormous changes ensued as they, intelligently picking up the emerging concerns of the community, won and took power and systematically implemented their policies. (Those were the days when you only had two years before the next election. In that time a new council had to think, organize, plan and implement the new direction the city should take).

TEAM's 1972 Policy Papers contained in the order of 200 specific policies concerning Civic Government, the Environment, Social matters, Taxation and Economics, Transportation, Parks and Recreation and Education

I can't and shouldn't recite those 200 policies, but they focused on the following:

- * Local politicians should be representative of every part of the city.
- * Policies and processes should concentrate on people, not things, and focus on creating a better and more livable city.
- * Municipal operations should be transparent, informative and encourage public involvement and discussion about changes planned for the city.
- * Council should set out environmental, social and financial objectives and create the policies and plans to effect needed change.

What resulted from that?

From my planner's perspective, here are some of the results;

- *The **Freeway** city had been blocked.
- *The massive **Coal Harbour** waterfront development had been rejected.
- *Those recommending a **third crossing** had gone into hiding (for a time!)
- *The sequence of **planning each neighbourhood** commenced, with local participation through neighbourhood storefront offices and citizen committees. Britannia, Kitsilano, Fairview Slopes were the first of those.
- * Planning commenced for the new community **of Champlain Heights**
- * A **Downtown Plan** was produced that reintroduced zoning for residential uses.
- *A totally new **development approvals process** was initiated including providing citizens with early information and their direct involvement in the decision-making process.
- * The commencement of what turned out to be a city wide comprehensive set of **urban design guidelines** that laid out desirable design parameters and development processes to ensure **neighbourly development**.
- * The determination of protection polices for our spectacular **views**.

* The first comprehensive **Heritage Inventory** and heritage preservation bylaws were produced.

* Team removed the proliferation of ugly **billboards** from the city and created a new sign bylaw.

*This was the time when the City initiated the complete revitalization of **False Creek**. It has changed from an industrial area of serious land, air and water pollution into what we tentatively conceived at the time, as a vibrant central city area oriented to and around a 200 acre area of accessible recreational water, walkways and parklands stitching together a ribbon of new neighbourhoods.

*False Creek was the first place anywhere in Canada to set and achieve the now enviable **social goals** of accommodating one third low income, one third mid income and one third higher income residences in a comprehensively designed inner city neighbourhood. It also achieved a high diversity of rental, subsidized, co-op and market housing of all types of occupancy and populations profiles. The elementary school was built early. Bus service was provided before the place was completed to establish the public transit habit early in its development. It was the first place to follow the principles of planning promoted by Jane Jacobs, Christopher Alexander, Kevin Lynch and other **notable design theorists**.

* We were the first in the country to place large **notice boards** on sites as soon as an application was received to inform neighbours what was being proposed and invite their comments. It all seems so obvious and necessary these days.

***Granville Island** was conceived out of TEAM Principles.

* While there are many theories (and credit-takers) about how the internationally renowned "**Vancouverism**" came about, I am convinced it was initiated by TEAM in the 70's. It was the combined abilities of **Art Phillips and Walter Hardwick and their TEAM colleagues** and those fundamental principles that TEAM articulated in its early days that shifted the nature of governance and planning in this city. They produced much of what we can admire about Vancouver today. It may be that those same humanistic principles need to be revisited today to deal with our current challenges.

Where are we now?

I realize we are again in a time **of a sea change**. Perhaps broader issues are having a greater impact on us than they did back in 1970. However, Globalization - global warming, global growth, global energy shortages, global ethical and value shifts, with rising oceans, end of oil, nations and cities in debt – these are exciting times! These are all impacting the way we go about governing our city.

I ask myself, do I understand this well enough to comment about it? Do my friends share this concern and are they prepared to do something about it? Do I think the current leadership has a wise handle on it? Do they and we have their priorities right?

We should be concerned about uncoordinated spot rezonings, density bonuses applied on a case-by-case basis, compromising our inherent values to obtain desired developments, the lack of a coordinated and citizen centered vision for the whole city,

While we may take pride in the enormous efforts brought to bear on hosting a highly successful Olympics – I wonder why we cannot organize ourselves to take pride as a community that has succeeded in overcoming social injustice. The plight of the many people suffering from serious addiction and mental illnesses on the streets of our city is frightening. The increasing gap between the very rich and those, who, while working, cannot afford a home of their own is also frightening. While efforts are being made to improve the homeless situation much, much more is needed to solve homelessness and provide the care people need to survive and flourish on their own

What can we do about it?

I am so pleased to see an increasing recognition of the real problems we are facing centering on of the impact of growth on our planet and our cities. There is a growing awareness that we just cannot go on equating more growth, more profits, more income, and more amenities, with success. Because I am not sure how to achieve these things I will end with some quotes.

Zia Sarder “The Good life of the good person can only be fully realized in the good society. Prosperity can only be conceived as a condition that includes obligations and responsibilities to others.”

Ben Okri “ We must bring back into society a deeper sense of the purpose of living. The unhappiness in so many places ought to tell us that success alone is

not enough. Material success has brought us to a strange spiritual and moral bankruptcy.

TEAM showed a lot of that humanistic spirit in their governing attitudes – concentration on the important as well as the urgent, the insistence that everything be done openly, that everyone is provided with the same information, that humans are more important than things, that quality of life comes from a balancing of environmental, social and economic matters for equality and economic justice. Thank you TEAM!