

# North Park Neighbourhood Association Newsletter

Reach us at [www.npna.ca](http://www.npna.ca) [info@npna.ca](mailto:info@npna.ca)

## North Park

*Special points of interest:*

- **Community Matters! Importance of Community Consultation**
- **Neighbourhood Festival 2008**
- **Land Use**
- **Local LEED® Case Study Home**
- **The North Park Native Plant Demonstration Garden**

## Community Matters! Importance of Community Consultation



**By Kristin Atwood, President, NPNA**

In any urban area, residents and businesses are going to interact with larger bodies, such as governments, as well as with other agencies and individuals that have contradictory interests and needs within one geographical space. When that happens, the potential for conflict is supposedly smoothed by the use of community consultation practices. However, while most people can agree on what community consultation is supposed to do, there is very little agreement in our society about how such a consultation process ought to be accomplished, to what degree, and how often.

What is “community consultation”? What should it be? In the four years that I’ve been involved with the association, I’ve seen what works and what doesn’t. What the city, social service organizations, and other stakeholders call “consultation” has varied to considerable degree – despite often revolving around similar issues.

Housing is a great example. In my time, I’ve seen the following scenarios with regard to tem-

porary shelter spaces in North Park;

- An informal conversation sparked by a city councilor and police liaison who came unannounced to a board meeting, that was later reported publicly to the media as demonstrable proof that the NPNA was in favour of a shelter project;
- An email from a charity organization asking my opinion, which was considered to be consultation with “the community”;
- A steering committee set up with a church committee that met regularly to discuss any issues and included a process for providing contact information to individual neighbours who wanted more information;
- A liaison process involving, in steps, myself, the NPNA committee, my immediate neighbours and the community at large in the development of a new shelter in North Park.

I’ve also had the experience of being a token representative on committees about issues such as services for drug users, community policing, and so forth, where there was an agenda to be accomplished regardless of whether or not I agreed with it or felt

that it had adequately taken the community’s needs into account.

On the other side of the gamut, there are land use consultations. In order for a developer to rezone a property, she or he must go through a lengthy process that includes community consultation. Guidelines for how communities should be contacted and when are in place. Policies even govern the size and content of signs used to advertise proposed zoning changes and times and dates for community meetings, as well as for how far around a development site notification must be extended to.

So why are there such strict rules for one kind of interaction with the community, but not for another? Some might argue that the City has tried to initiate a process for standardizing community involvement in social service decisions through the implementation of Good Neighbour Agreements (GNAs). GNAs are accountability documents, usually signed by representatives from business, residents, police, the city, and the social service organization, that are intended to provide the community with a

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## Community Matters! Importance of Community Consultation-...continued

Say, "I'm getting involved."  
Because there is one thing more than anything else that will defeat a community consultation process: apathy.

vehicle through which to feel assured that their needs are taken into consideration in planning and developing services in their area. Steering committees typically oversee GNAs to ensure that the tenets of the agreement are being adhered to.

At its best, a GNA operates as a bond between organizations that facilitates their working together to create positive change. The NPNA experienced this with the Next Steps Shelter GNA. Cool Aid, which operates the shelter, initiated a consultation process early in the planning stages and invited feedback from neighbours, who met both with the organization and with each other before drafting a Good Neighbour Agreement on their own. This agreement was accepted with minor revisions by Cool Aid, the city, and the police and a number of the articles listed in that agreement have already been accomplished.

At its worst, a GNA is just another bureaucratic process that accomplishes nothing. The NPNA has experienced this as well, when a GNA Steering Committee was set up with the needle exchange operated through AIDS Vancouver Island. For months, representatives met to discuss items that

should be included in the agreement and struggled with practical limitations. Monthly meetings with a larger community group were also held. Eventually the process was stopped because several neighbours around the needle exchange decided to take legal action instead. Despite hours of effort, the Needle Exchange GNA was anything but good: we felt like token representatives whose opinions weren't going to be considered seriously because funding for effective change (both for needle exchange services and policing) didn't exist. It left many of us wondering, why had we even bothered?

I wish that I could conclude this article with something concrete – some clear idea of what a community consultation should be, some words of wisdom for those up- and coming community activists, some indication that things were getting better. Unfortunately, four years later, I still think that community consultations on social service issues are a big muddle. There is very little guidance from the city, and when direction does come, it often comes with a "this is how it's going to be done" attitude as opposed to a

mindset of openness to community ideas.

As for myself, well... I've spent the last four years trying my best to build relationships with all sorts of stakeholders in this city. I've been of the mindset that getting along and trying to work with people instead of fighting against them. In some instances, like with Cool Aid and the Victoria Police, that's been the right approach. In other instances, it hasn't seemed to matter. Either way, my term is ending in October of this year and I won't be back to the board of the NPNA for a while – but I do have one piece of advice for my neighbours before I go: if you're concerned about something, say something. Say, "When can I meet with you to tell you my concerns?" Say, "I want you to come write a story about what's going on in my community." Say, "I'm getting involved." Because there is one thing more than anything else that will defeat a community consultation process: apathy. There can be no consultation if there is no community with which to consult. ✎

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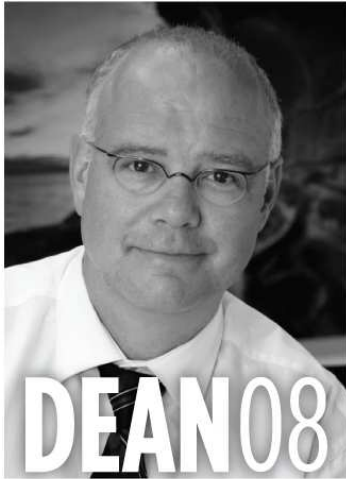


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Alex Kerr - Unity Committee

*This event is an open celebration of the diversity of the neighbourhood*

## Neighbourhood Festival 2008 – August 16th Help Celebrate Our 4th Annual Neighbourhood Festival!

For the past 3 years the North Park Neighbourhood Association (NPNA) has hosted a Neighbourhood Festival. This event is an open celebration of the diversity of the neighbourhood and focuses on the positive elements for the area. Participants include businesses, organizations, and neighbours in an informal festival atmosphere.

The concept evolved from the idea that we needed a positive element to counter some of the less than pleasant issues in the area. To that end the location was chosen with the intent of bringing some community spirit to some of the challenged areas.

This concept was furthered in moving the event to the current venue, Franklin Green.

Franklin Green had become marginalized over the years and a NPNA action plan was put in place in cooperation with the City to renovate and rejuvenate the park, claiming it back for the people of the area. To that end we have been very happy with the results including the children’s play area, pickle ball courts, bocce ball area and general improvements.

Now that NPNA and Fernwood have embarked on the North Park Village concept with Frank-

lin Green being one of the gate keeper areas it made perfect sense to retain the area as our festival venue. As the Village concept spans both North Park and Fernwood we would like to welcome everyone to come out and enjoy the festival! Please join us for this fun event!

**When – Saturday August 16, 2008 – Noon until 4:00 pm**

**Where – The Newly Rejuvenated Franklin Green – Cook and Mason Street – behind Welburns**

**What – Food, Fun for all ages, Entertainment, Instruction on how to play pickle ball, information and a chance to meet some neighbours**



Thomas Guerrero Land Use Committee

*“Land Use has been a quiet topic in North Park since last summer”*

## The North Park Land Use Committee 2008

Land Use has been a quiet topic in North Park since last summer. While many communities around Victoria’s core have been seeing a lot of change North Park has been for the most part overlooked by developers. 920-926 Caledonia did finally receive City approval to go ahead however work has yet to begin on the site. The two Large & Co projects in

North Park both were completed, one is located in the 800 block of Princess and the other is on the corner of Bay and Quadra. New owners are now moving in. The Palladian project on Quadra (Old Nelson Music Building) is actually getting close to occupancy so we should be seeing some new faces here soon as well. For the next year the only change that may be on the hori-

zon is a project to put in a small commercial/residential building on Cormorant Street where the WIN Office is currently. Once the project moves forward there will be a community meeting, the NPNA LUC will notify the community at the time. As always if you have any questions or comments on Land Use or Heritage buildings in North Park feel free to contact me to talk about it. ☺

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## Local LEED® Case Study Home “Project vivo”

A local eco-renovation of a modest home bordering North Park and Fernwood has found itself in the national spotlight.

“Project vivo” was selected to participate as a pilot project in the Canada Green Building Council’s (CaGBC) residential case study program [see text box below for details].

Project vivo is the only existing home (major gut and rehab) of the 45 projects selected nationwide. That makes Project vivo unique to the CaGBC’s case study group; its desire to “go green” is restricted by the parameters of cost and of current existence, a reality for most of us when renovating older houses on limited budgets.

“The vivo project team has a clear, singular vision. Our project performance goal is not about point-chasing or achieving a silver, gold or platinum LEED rating, it is about striving for achievement of “Sustainability for the Household”, not just “Sustainability of the Home” states vivo’s Project Manager and Homeowner, Allison Ashcroft.

That said, Project vivo predicts it will secure a solid Gold rating, with its preliminary conservative estimate calculating the score at 84 points on the LEED Homes rating scale, just 2 points shy of Platinum, the system’s highest certification level.

“The design and renovation of the vivo home is merely one aspect of Project vivo. I think by now we all know that we

are capable of building “green” homes - the technology exists, the architects are trained, the research evidencing the benefits are accumulating. The greater imperative for our project is to study and report on the accessibility, affordability and attributable value of greening existing homes by a regular, albeit enthusiastic, homeowner”, says Ashcroft with a grin. The homeowner, in this case, isn’t just enthusiastic, though she’ll tell you that’s exactly how it all started for her. Allison is a LEED Accredited Professional and the director of vivo ventures, a company providing “Choices for Sustainable Living” and an through the provision of integrated sustainable solutions for the built environment. Through its subsidiary, vivodepot, the company supplies green building materials and technologies bundled with project-specific consultation. vivo is based in Victoria, BC and is growing its network of sustainable solutions providers nationwide.

Nuts and Bolts of Project vivo:

The proposed project is a major remodel (gut/rebuild and addition), involving, Deconstruction and rebuilding of a portion of the existing home, Retro-commissioning of the existing building, Construction of a new 2 storey addition off the rear of the building, and Installation of a green/living roof on the existing, single-storey building.

Project vivo Materials and Technologies:



Canadian LEED® Case Study Home “Project vivo” has selected a prefabricated steel structural insulated panel from kama Energy Efficient Building Systems for the floor, wall and roof panels of its eco-efficient two-storey addition. Project vivo is also using Rainwater HOG’s water storage tanks, RainTube’s Gutter protection system, EcoClad for exterior cladding, EnviroTrash’s Clean Chute for garbage and recycling management, Apricus Solar Collectors for solar hot water. Local company, Island Basement Systems, is assisting the team with building envelope upgrades for the restoration of a healthy, durable home and creation of a high performance building. To learn more about Project vivo and to track its progress, visit vivodepot.com. Project vivo is looking for interested parties to join their team. If you would like to be a part of this great local experience and want to help in the design and build of a sustainability framework for residential housing in Canada, please contact Allison Ashcroft, vivo LEED for Homes Case Study Project Manager at [allison@vivodepot.com](mailto:allison@vivodepot.com). ☞

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# Introducing the North Park Native Plant Demonstration Garden at Pembroke and Vancouver

By Todd Doherty

The NPNA has applied for and received a Greenways Grant from the City of Victoria to help create a 20' x 120' native plant demonstration garden on the boulevard on the southwest corner of the intersection at Pembroke and Vancouver streets. The purpose of this project is to demonstrate, and educate people about, the original habitat of our neighbourhood by reintroducing the native plants, which will in turn help attract and support our native wildlife species. These plant species are very well adapted to our wet winters and dry summers and therefore make a wonderful and low

maintenance addition to all our gardens.

Work has already begun. The area has been sheet mulched and some planting has begun. Sheet mulching is a chemical free method of eliminating unwanted vegetation over a large area. Cardboard or newspaper is laid over the grass and weeds, and then soil and mulch is laid over that. The area is kept damp and the grass and weeds will die off as the cardboard decomposes. Planting of a lot of the plants will occur after summer when the rains begin to fall; though, some planting of salvaged plants has already

occurred and will continue to occur as salvage opportunities are arranged by the Native Plant Study Group [www.npsg.ca](http://www.npsg.ca). Informative Signage will be incorporated to explain what you are seeing and to encourage your own use of native plants in your gardens. Once established, the garden will fill in nicely and will require very little to no additional watering.

For more info on North Park's Native Plant Demonstration Garden or to become involved, contact Todd Doherty: [toddco@hotmail.com](mailto:toddco@hotmail.com) or 250 388 9101. ☞

We gratefully acknowledge the generous participation of the following:



## Welcome to North Park Village!

By

Alex Kerr

Chair Unity Committee

As many of you may have noticed the banners along Cook St. between Pandora and Caledonia and may have wondered exactly what is going on, here goes.

North Park Neighbourhood Assn. with the blessing of the FCA and NRG and the cooperation of the businesses in the Cook St. area, has started to work towards setting up a village concept for Cook St. between Pandora and Caledonia.

The idea of the village is to promote the area as a destination for shopping and a gathering place that the area can be proud of.

To this end we applied for and received a neighbourhood enhancement

grant for banners, benches and bike racks. A banner design competition was held and two designs were chosen. We also applied for and received a special projects grant to hold a place making workshop. The workshop was held on Feb.16, 2008. There were many good ideas brought forth. If anyone wants to read the report it is posted on our website at [www.npna.ca](http://www.npna.ca).

To date we have had meetings with Parks and work has started to rebuild Franklin Green Park located behind Wellburn's Market. There is a new playground, there will be a new path, lighting, pickle ball and bocce courts. Completion date is June 2008.

The banners were installed the week of April 7, 2008. The next step is to have the 3 bike racks and two benches installed. These will be installed as per

the recommendations of the place making workshop. There is also a web site being established at [www.northparkvillage.ca](http://www.northparkvillage.ca) for the use and promotion of the area.

Our plan is to have a bulletin board installed in the village this coming year as well as establishing a merchant's assoc. Generally we will be working with the merchants and residents on a tidy up program. We are working towards having more activities in the Franklin Green Park when it is finished.

This is an ongoing project and will take several years to complete. (Streetscape, signage etc.) More updates will follow as things progress.

Remember that this is your village also and it needs your support to flourish. ☞