

## OPINION

# City redevelopment boom brings neighbourhood demolition derby

**War zone: Residents fight noise, trash and property damage**



Barbara Yaffe

**W**hen a construction crew began work last March on a property next to mine, I could not have anticipated the mayhem that would be visited on my quiet Kitsilano street.

Ear-splitting noise. Sawdust. Blaring music. Loud profanities. Trucks continually blocking the back lane. And workers failing to respect a 7:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. window mandated by Vancouver's noise bylaw.

But all that may not be uncommon. Some construction crews keen to "get the job done" are clashing with residents of generally mature neighbourhoods who do not appreciate the disturbance.

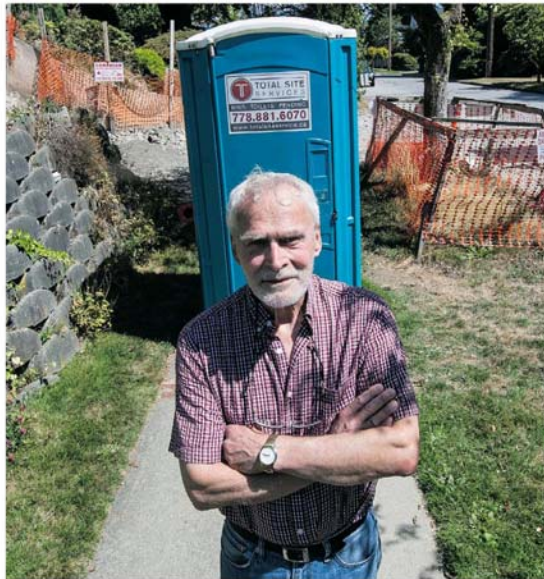
Vancouverite Vicki Dartnell, living on Fraser Street, reports: "Our fence was vandalized and our glass broken by the framers next door when we complained about damage they had caused to our fence. (The framers later replaced the glass.)"

"For months, our house was like a war zone," says Dartnell, "with rampant trespassing on our driveway, construction vehicles blocking it, and garbage dumped in our can."

Darlene and David Nath, in Mackenzie Heights, sent photographs of their fence which they said had been damaged by a construction crew.

When I pointed out my own fence damage to the construction foreman next door, he seemed sympathetic, but never fixed the fence.

"For the past two years," wrote Darlene Nath, "we have had to endure building and vehicle noises, excavations, cement and delivery trucks, road and lane blockages constantly, sometimes beyond 8 p.m." She says the crews' trucks created ruts in the boulevard in front of her home.



STEVE BOSCH/PHOTO

Dunbar resident Peter Sven takes photos of suspected bylaw violations by construction crews in his neighbourhood. He sent photos to the mayor and city councillors depicting assorted violations, with a letter complaining that construction sites are not being properly supervised.

While there are probably examples out there of polite, considerate crews, clearly more attention needs to be paid to the ones who are not, especially given that so much redevelopment is occurring as people try to capitalize on Vancouver's rising property values. (In 2013, the city issued some 1,000 demolition permits.)

Vancouver ought to have a construction ombudsman. But this is a touchy issue because, of course, city politicians rely on developers' donations.

Perhaps not surprisingly, a July 22-27 online Justason Market Intelligence poll found 70 per cent of 350 adult respondents in Vancouver

agreed that "developers have too much control over government." And 62 per cent said Vancouver's government "doesn't consider residents' opinions."

Certainly, Mayor Gregor Robertson has had little to say about the demolition derby going on in some Vancouver neighbourhoods.

Robertson's silence comes despite Heritage Canada National Trust's placement on its 2014 list of most endangered places in Canada, "Vancouver west side character homes and gardens — Shaughnessy, Kerrisdale, Point Grey and Dunbar Neighbourhoods."

The Ottawa-based organization describes the problem as "demolition of original housing stock in favour of 'monster' houses, decimating affordable housing and character of Vancouver neighbourhoods."

Longtime Dunbar resident Peter Sven, a retired engineering draughtsman, has read the city's bylaws and has taken to photographing suspected bylaw violations by construction crews around his neighbourhood.

He sent photos last June to the mayor and city councillors depicting assorted violations, with a letter complaining that construction sites are not being properly supervised. He has found porta-potties and construction vehicles parked on boulevards, and garbage strewn across work sites.

Sven points out that damaged sidewalks, curbs and lanes often are not repaired by the construction crews. He says: "Engineering inspectors are pandering to the construction industry and are not adequately enforcing the city's bylaws."

A city reply to Sven's letter should provide little comfort to those in the neighbourhoods being intruded upon. An Aug. 7 response from Street Operations Director Taryn Scollard stated: "There are a limited number of resources available and inspectors can not typically be at every site, every day."

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