



**HOUSING
VANCOUVER**

58 W Hastings Design Focus Groups

Summary Report
April 19, 2018



INTRODUCTION

On January 30th, 2018, Vancouver City Council approved a development at 58 W Hastings for a 10-storey mixed-use building with commercial and office uses on the first three floors and 231 units of social housing above.

The applicant for the development is the Vancouver Chinatown Foundation (the prospective leaseholder) on behalf of the City of Vancouver (the property owner) and Vancouver Coastal Health (the prospective healthcare operator).

Community Advisory Committee

As a condition of rezoning approval, a Community Advisory Committee (CAC) was established for the 58 W Hastings development, made up of representatives from the City of Vancouver, BC Housing, Vancouver Coastal Health, Vancouver Chinatown Foundation, as well as representatives from a number of DTES community organizations. The CAC serves as a forum where community members who have an interest in or are affected by the development of this site, can freely discuss issues, exchange information, and provide advice and input to the applicant team on the development. The CAC serves as an advisory group, not a decision making body.

The Terms of Reference for the 58 W Hastings CAC outlined three key topics to be covered over the course of six sessions:

- 1) Building Design Review
- 2) Resident-Empowered Governance Model for Building Operations
- 3) Funding Advocacy and Awareness

DESIGN FOCUS GROUPS

As part of the CAC's "Building Design Review", two focus groups were held in March and April, 2018 in order to solicit feedback on elements of the building's design, prior to Vancouver Chinatown Foundation's architect submitting the designs as part of the development permit application to the City of Vancouver. In addition to existing CAC members, other stakeholders were invited to participate in the focus groups, including social housing tenants and providers, as well as neighbouring businesses and community groups.

A summary of the focus group participation is below:

Focus Group	Date	Location	# Staff/ Facilitators	# Participants
Chinese Seniors	Thursday , March 29 th , 2018	Chinese Cultural Centre (50 E Pender)	9 facilitators total representing the following organizations: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• City of Vancouver• Vancouver Affordable Housing Agency• BC Housing	23 participants total representing tenants from variety of low-income serving social housing buildings.

Focus Group	Date	Location	# Staff/ Facilitators	# Participants
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vancouver Coastal Health • Vancouver Chinatown Foundation • SUCCESS (Chinese Translator) 	
CAC and other community members	Tuesday, April 3 rd , 2018	Dodson Rooms (25 E Hastings)	15 facilitators total representing the following organizations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Vancouver • Vancouver Affordable Housing Agency • Vancouver Coastal Health • Vancouver Chinatown Foundation 	29 participants total representing the following organizations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Vancouver • Vancouver Affordable Housing Agency • BC Housing • Vancouver Coastal Health • Vancouver Chinatown Foundation • Our Homes Can't Wait • Gallery Gachet • Western Aboriginal Harm Reduction Society (WAHRS) • AHA Media • Community Arts Council of Vancouver • Hastings Crossing BIA • Portland Hotel Society • Binner's Project • Hives for Humanity • Central City Foundation • SUCCESS • Power of Women • Tenants from variety of social housing buildings.
TOTAL				51 participants

Focus Group Format

Each focus group began with an overview of the project components and a brief explanation of the building designs by City staff. Participants were invited to examine and ask questions about the design boards as well as the building model.

The sessions were set up as roundtable discussions, each facilitated by at least two staff members. One set of large printed plans was provided on each table for participants to examine

and comment on. A note taker was assigned to each table to ensure that all information was accurately captured.

At each session, participants were asked to respond to two general discussion questions:

- In your opinion, what design elements can make this building a safe, accessible and welcoming place? Are there elements you like in other social housing buildings that could be incorporated here?
- How do you think the different shared spaces in the building could be used? (ie: retail component, garden, children's play area, indoor shared space, laundry, etc.)?

Participants were encouraged to focus the discussion on the design elements of the project, recognizing that other important topics related to the development (ie: affordability levels, building operations, tenant selection, etc.) would be discussed in more detail at future CAC sessions. It was communicated at the beginning of each focus group that all feedback would be put forward to the applicant for consideration, and that feasible ideas would be incorporated into design changes while others would be further explored as part of future initiatives. All information gathered was noted, synthesized and analyzed by City staff.

Key Themes and Findings

During the focus group sessions, participants discussed the challenges and opportunities related to both the design and potential future programming of the building. Although there were some areas of disagreement between participants on specific design and program elements, a number of key themes emerged that supported common goals for the building. The detailed feedback from both sessions is included in Appendix A.

Generally, participants agreed that in the new development, they would like to see:

- Exterior building design that is animated and stands out on the block, is reflective and inclusive of different cultures that live and work in the neighborhood (ie: Indigenous and Chinese cultures), incorporates existing uses of the site (ie: Indigenous mural at 20 W Hastings, Hives for Humanity), and commemorates the long history of activism on the site. Participants highlighted the importance of involving local groups, such as Culture Saves Lives and Mission Possible, in the design and ongoing programming of the building.
- Common amenities spaces that are large, accessible to all residents in the building, and enable activities that cater to diverse sets of interests and needs, including entertainment, fitness, artistic expression, shared cooking, connection to nature, and healing spaces. Participants agreed that it was important to have some programmed design elements in the common spaces, while still leaving space for tenants to create



community and social interaction spontaneously.

- Safety and security mechanisms both inside and outside the building through installation of security cameras in entrances and a buzzer/fob system, adequate lighting, and tenant-empowered safety measures such as a “peer-to-peer” leadership system. Participants expressed that the alleyway should be activated through art, games, and bright lights, to encourage healthy social interaction and discourage garbage and illicit behavior. There was general agreement among participants that a balance needs to be struck between ensuring tenant and community safety without promoting stigmatization by creating a monitored or “institutionalized” environment.
- Livability and health considerations through building design, including through accessibility measures (ie: wide corridors and handrails), soundproofing through use of stabilizing materials, proper ventilation and air circulation, large windows and private outdoor spaces, adjustable lighting, and adequate access to garbage and recycling bins. Participants noted that accessible and affordable services, such as free laundry and phone services, would also improve livability.
- Commercial space that is local-serving, affordable, inclusive, and incorporates existing activities on the site. Participants suggested possible retail uses, including a tenant resource or advocacy centre, theatre space, art gallery, affordable cafe, or informal enterprise space for community members to sell hand-made products and make supplemental income. There was a strong sentiment among participants that the retail units on this building not be “zones of exclusion” for low-income people, instead meeting the needs of the neighborhood’s diverse population.
- A health care clinic that offers a wide range of services (primarily care, pharmacy, counselling, harm reduction), caters to diverse populations in the neighborhood (ie: through services in multiple languages) and hires special-trained staff in trauma-informed and culturally sensitive practices to reduce health stigma, particularly around mental health and addictions. Many participants also emphasized the value of incorporating traditional Indigenous healing practices into the health clinic (ie: Elders in residence, smudging rooms, healing circles).

“The building and alleyway should be designed in a way that promotes safety through local art, adequate lighting, and peer-to-peer leadership programs where tenants look out for each other.”

Tenants want to feel safe, not monitored or institutionalized.”

-Focus Group Participant

“The housing and health clinic should reflect Indigenous culture and design and make space for traditional healing practices. These spaces could be used by Non-Natives as well... People from all cultures need healing.”

-Focus Group Participant

- Involvement of local residents and tenants in building construction and daily building operations, in order to create a more welcoming and resilient environment. Participants also highlighted the value of creating opportunities for tenant interaction and community-building, through peer to peer supports, monthly gatherings, information/notice boards, and dispersing different tenant groups throughout building.

WHAT COMES NEXT?

The design focus group sessions provided an important and unique opportunity for community members and other key stakeholders to provide feedback on the design elements and future programming at 58 W Hastings, with the goal of designing homes and services that meet the diverse needs of its future residents.

As an outcome of the focus groups, the project partners made a commitment to participants to:

- Synthesize all feedback received and forward to the applicant team for consideration.
- Incorporate feasible ideas into revised designs submitted by the applicant team as part of the development permit application to the City of Vancouver, who will review for fit with design suggestions.
- Integrate suggestions for future building programming and operations, where possible.
- Hold additional follow-up meetings with specific groups, as requested, around particular design elements (ie: outdoor amenity space landscaping).
- Provide updates to participants and the wider community as the proposal progresses.

The estimated timeline for the next steps in the project is as follows:

- Decision by City on approval of Development Permit Application – Summer/Fall 2018
- Decision by City Council on approval of lease between Vancouver Chinatown Foundation and City of Vancouver – Fall/ Winter 2018
- Completion of Building – 2021 at the earliest

Ongoing:

- Community Advisory Committee meetings
- Fundraising by Vancouver Chinatown Foundation
- Operator selection for the housing units

The City of Vancouver would like to extend a huge thank you to all of you who took the time and effort to participate in the design focus groups. Your contributions and feedback will inform the designs of the mixed-used development at 58 W Hastings, and will work to better meet the diverse needs of the building's future residents and service users.

APPENDIX A: FEEDBACK FROM FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

1) Overall Building Design:

- Building stands out on the block but there are parts that are bland, boring, institutional, hospital-like, and too similar to other buildings in the area.
- There is an opportunity to animate the building and to better reflect the community/people who will be living there.
- Each of the five façade components should be unique to better reflect the character of the neighbourhood and multiple cultures living and working together.
- Incorporation of local, meaningful artwork in the building's interior and exterior will prevent vandalism.
- History and existing uses of the site should be reflected in the new building. This could be achieved through a few different ways:
 - Plaque with history of the building (ie: History of Strathcona neighbourhood installed opposite of RayCam Community Centre)
 - Wall of art displaying history of activism on the site
 - Preservation of existing mural at 20 W Hastings by setting the building back ~10' so that the mural is not covered. The mural would not be visible from the street, but pedestrians going through the lane would be able to see the lane. The 10~ wide area would also act as passageway to the lane, and could become a gathering space. Windows could also be oriented to the lane space.
- Cultural elements that represent diversity of DTES community should be incorporated into design.
 - First Nations Culture:
 - Four colours (white, red, yellow, black) representing Four Nations throughout the building and on the outdoor awnings
 - "Welcome" Totem Pole in at least one of the entries (ie: Totem Pole at modular housing at Main and Terminal)
 - Incorporation of cedar into the cladding palette
 - Indigenous local art in hallways and entrances to feel less institutional, especially because hallways are so long. Could have different artistic themes on each floor representing different cultural aspects (ie: room themes at Skwachays Lodge).
 - Trees with cultural/ historic significance
 - Chinese Culture:
 - Chinese lanterns in front of buildings (ie: Telus Chinese lanterns)
 - Chinese artwork

-
- Examples of culturally sensitive and welcoming design: Pidgin Park Bank, 312 Main St., Broadway Housing Community
 - Other design features for consideration:
 - Vinyl wraps and mosaic tiles
 - Gargoyles
 - Art on the doorways
 - Window boxes for flower beds in the front of the building
 - Neon windows and lighting
 - Unconventional, reclaimed materials from demolished buildings in the areas materials
 - Windows that open more than just a small portion at the bottom (as shown on lower level units in front façade)
 - As much greenery incorporated to exterior of building as possible (ie: in the gaps above the CRU spaces).
 - Light and brightly painted walls inside
 - Hardwood or polished concrete floors
 - Sustainability measures (ie: solar panels)
 - Involve local groups in design and ongoing programming:
 - Culture Saves Lives
 - Watari
 - Mission Possible (have worked with VCH previously)
 - First Nations artists commissioned to do artwork, lead Pow wows, drum circles, smudging ceremonies

2) Indoor Common Amenity Spaces

Design:

- Amenity spaces should be larger if they are to accommodate all 231 households in the building.
- Instead of two separate smaller amenity spaces, consider one larger space. Moveable dividers could be used to partition the space to different temporary uses.
- Space will be more widely used if is located on the ground floor, as it would be more accessible and conducive to creating community organically (ie: ground floor space at Roddan Lodge was widely used because it was located on the ground floor).
- One of the spaces should also be available to the public (ie: atrium in Woodward's development with basketball, piano).

- Spaces should include large windows and bathrooms.
- Spaces should incorporate artistic, cultural elements in the design to reflect the neighbourhood's diverse cultures and ethnicities (ie: indoor murals/artwork by local artists).

Programming/ Potential Uses:

- Amenity uses should not duplicate amenities already in the area, but should fill a gap.
- All building residents, regardless of the rental rate they are paying, should be allowed access to the building's amenities, and spaces should be designed in a way that are inclusive to diverse groups of tenants (ie: have something for everyone).
- Spaces should meet different needs without being "over-programmed" or forced; tenants should also be able to organically use the space to gather, exchange news, and socialize in a way that is natural
- Tenants could contribute to daily maintenance/clean-up of amenity spaces.
- The potential uses of the amenity spaced could include:
 - Meditation or healing spaces for different cultures (ie: Indigenous, Chinese), including Tai Chi, a Smudging Room, and a Sweat Lodge
 - Communal kitchen
 - T.V and Games (ie: Table Tennis, Mahjong)
 - Music (ie: piano in the room, which was widely used by Chinese seniors in Roddan Lodge)
 - Artist uses, including woodworking shop, sewing, painting, art production, and carving area to address mental health and encourage creativity (ie: similar spaces at Gallery Gachet, Coast Mental Health)
 - Performance space (ie: a 40-seat black box theatre)
 - Media room with access to computers, printers, phones (free for local calls and pooling for long distance plan), free wifi, and workspace stations (ie: Vancouver Community Net)
 - A fitness centre with basic equipment (ie: treadmill) and pool
 - Smoking area (requested by Chinese seniors)
 - Monthly gatherings to get to know the other tenants
 - Connection to outdoor space

3) Outdoor Amenity Space (Garden) – Design and Programming

- Outdoor amenity space will be underutilized if not designed properly (ie: if there are no sitting areas).

- Outdoor area/green space is critical for tenants to connect with nature, particularly those with mental health issues.
- Garden should be reinforced now to avoid expensive retrofitting later.
- Consider adding additional outdoor space on rooftop (ie: rooftop garden) and other floors; flat roof on 10th floor should allow for this.
- Hire local crew (ie: members from Hives for Humanity) and engage tenants to maintain and tend to outdoor space.
- Leave some empty space that tenants can use for their own specific activities.
- Plant trees with local/cultural significance (through additional consultation with different cultural groups).
- Outdoor space could be sectioned off for different uses.
- The potential uses of the outdoor amenity space could include:
 - BBQ area
 - Patio space with seating areas (ie: couches and tables)
 - Daycare integrated in the garden (conduct post-occupancy study of Woodward's family housing daycare to understand what works)
 - Garden plots (flowers, fruits, vegetables, herbs, etc.) so tenants have the opportunity to grow their own food (ie: Solheim Place on Union St.)
 - Scaled or vertical farming, with consideration for grey/rain water collection, composting, keyhole-shaped garden beds, sustainability/LEED gold requirements
 - Glass Greenhouse in addition to outdoor garden
 - Bee hives (incorporate hives that already exist on the site)

4) Health and Safety Features

- Security:
 - Needs to be a balance between ensuring safety without tenants feeling that they are being monitored/ institutionalized.
 - Security cameras in entrance and corridors to prevent crime.
 - Buzzer system with access only to tenant floor and common floors.
 - Fobs could be in the form of bracelets so tenants are less likely to lose them and have to pay replacement fee.
 - Careful consideration for selection of security guards to avoid prejudice behaviour; any security staff need to be properly trained in cultural sensitivity, de-escalation.
 - In place of security guards, suggest peer leadership system instead in which people get to know each other in order to support and look out for one another.
 - Front desk staff should be only to assist tenants, not to monitor or crack down on tenants.
 - No guest policies, this infringes on tenant rights.
 - Adequate lighting in the front and rear facades at night.

-
- Alleyway should be designed in a way that is safe, animated, and not inviting for people to deal drugs or squat. Could be activated through art work/ murals, basketball court, green space, bright lights, or activities like market or vending, or could be gated to prevent strangers from walking in (ie: alley behind Main and Columbia).
 - Accessibility:
 - Hallways need to be wide enough (5-10 ft) to accommodate oversized scooters, walkers, or two motorized wheelchairs passing each other.
 - Provide a knocker on each unit doors.
 - Need short bathtubs (ie: half the height of regular bathtub) in washrooms and handrails in corridors and washrooms for tenants with mobility issues.
 - Way-finding measures for visually-impaired tenants, including brail on signs and elevator buttons, and changes in floor texture.
 - Need at least two sets of elevators.
 - Soundproofing:
 - Noise is a concern due to location; need mitigations for noise coming from alleys and rear entrances.
 - Use stabilizing materials that insulate sound/ minimize noise transfer (ie: concrete, insulation).
 - Ventilation:
 - Good air circulation in building is very important.
 - Placement of laundry exhaust is important so that it is properly vented and doesn't blow into rooms.
 - Air out units prior to move-in to remove toxic smell of new fixtures.
 - Include an air conditioning system to address heat and odour issues.
 - Laundry:
 - In-suite laundry preferred, especially for hygienic reasons.
 - If shared laundry, should be free with 24/7 access.
 - Include sink, storage space and folding areas.
 - Consider lockers and an a station for sewing/hemming clothes.
 - Other Features to Enhance Safety and Liveability:
 - Big windows in all of the units to let in light/ prevent claustrophobia.
 - Balconies in each unit as people need individual outdoor space.
 - Hard surface floors (hardwood or laminate, not carper) to reduce allergies, easier to clean.
 - Recycling and garbage bins on each floor and facilities, or a chute on each floor to dispose of garbage.
 - Pet disposal bin at entrance of building.
 - Adjustable lighting (bright to dim) in units and hallways, particularly for seniors who have issues with visions.
 - Fogged windows in bathrooms instead of blinds.
 - Bed bug sauna in building.
 - Have harm reduction measures available in building (ie: needle boxes).

5) Parking and Storage

- Need more bike parking underground so tenants don't bring their bikes to the units.
- Parking space needs to be well-lit to prevent from bike theft.
- Tenants should be allowed to rent out their car or bike stalls if they are not being utilized.
- Some of the underground parking should be allocated to woodworking areas and space for binners' storage.

6) Commercial/ Retail Space

- Any and all retail should have a community benefit agreement in place, ensuring that it is local-serving and the money is reinvested back into the housing component.
- Need to ensure that existing businesses can come back/remain on the site (ie: Potluck Café, Indigenous carver).
- Any retail should be affordable, inclusive and welcoming to a diverse population with diverse incomes; don't want to create more "zones of exclusion" (ie: high-end restaurants and coffee shops unaffordable to low-income population).
- Process for selecting retail/commercial tenants should be transparent and involve tenants and other community members.
- Commercial space should have public bathrooms and public benches.
- Potential retail uses could include:
 - Resource/advocacy centre for tenants (referrals, information, etc.)
 - Performance/ theatre space
 - Art gallery
 - Social enterprise
 - Affordable café with regular communal gatherings (artist exhibits, open mics, etc.)
 - Share-use-repair businesses (ie: Brew Co-op)
 - One CRU space for tenants/informal enterprise (ie: where community members/local vendors can sell their handmade art, food, and services on an ad-hoc basis to make supplemental income, as there are many community members who make things and want to share their talents)
 - Peer to peer teaching/ education space (ie: volunteer chef like "Bannock lady" to teach cooking classes to tenants/community members on donation basis)
 - Tourist uses (as long as it benefits local community members and is reinvested into building)

- Low-income residents should get discount cards (ie: discount meals) to be able to use the commercial spaces

7) Health Care Clinic

- The health care space is too large and space should be prioritized for more housing units and common amenity spaces.
- Some concern about housing and health clinic being co-located (ie: Chinese seniors want measures in place to ensure sanitary conditions, fear of stigmatization around living in housing with health clinic underneath).
- Health services should be catered to diverse populations, including services in multiple languages (English, Mandarin, Cantonese), rides to appointments for being with mobility issues.
- Health centre should offer range of health services, including primary care, dentist, pharmacy, counselling, harm reduction for sterile equipment, and referral services).
- Need specially trained service workers in health clinic (trauma-informed practice, culturally sensitive) to reduce stigma around mental health/addictions.
- Need small teams that can get to know the individual patients so it isn't overwhelming/confusing.
- Peer program for drug overdose prevention.
- Incorporation of Indigenous culture and practices:
 - Spiritual guidance from Elders in residence (ie: Vancouver Native Health)
 - Monthly healing circle (ie: VANDU/VAHRS "One Heart Healing Circle" has been very effective in improving participants well-being, reducing substance use challenges)
 - Smudging room (ie: Skwachays Lodge)
- Need to ensure adequate separation between health and housing uses.
- In advance of health care clinic opening, conduct citywide campaign to reduce stigmatization of mental health and addictions.

8) Overall Building Operations

- Involving local people/ tenants in daily building operations and governance will make for a more welcoming and resilient environment in the building.
- Include access to supports for tenants who need it (ie: Elderly residents, hoarders, people struggling with mental health).
- Hire local trades people for building construction/fit-out (ie: through Embers).

-
- Consider regular programming in building so tenants can get to know each other/create community.
 - Provide transparency around operator and tenant selection, and prioritize local residents (those already living in DTES) for this building.
 - Mix different tenant types throughout building (ie: not concentrate seniors all on one floor).
 - All communication with buildings tenants should be in multiple languages.