

**DRAFT NOTES**  
**LOCAL AREA PLANNING PROCESS (LAPP) BUSINESS STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP**  
**THURSDAY, 5 JULY 2012, 5:00 TO 8:00PM**  
**FLACK BLOCK, 163 WEST HASTINGS STREET**

**1. WHY DID YOU LOCATE YOUR BUSINESS HERE?**

- Potluck wanted to be close to the market and close to the people we wanted to hire.
- Location was lacking a gym, the lease rate was good, filling a market niche, we felt this was an emerging area/market
- Chinatown merchants feel Chinatown is attractive for heritage and cultural factors, even the newcomers.
- Access to market, close to downtown, but also close to light industrial space, affordable land
- Proximity to downtown core, young intellectual professionals that we like to hire, affordable rates, also an affinity with the area, we like the grittiness
- Olympics (VANOC) we could get bedding and other materials by donation and sell it cheap which was good for the area, we were told in the past that all the Olympics took their stuff to the dump! We thought it would be great to divert that stuff and employ people in the DTES with those jobs.
- It's the antithesis of Robson street, vitality, edginess
- Ethos and policies of business were relevant to this community
- Local purchasing
- Hiring locals
- Employ residents with employment barriers
- Proximity
- To staff – young, university talent
- To market/clients (downtown)
- To Aboriginal labour pool including youth - training and capacity-building for Aboriginals to meet the emerging demand
- To industrial space and manufacturing sector
- Low lease rates
- Forced out of other, higher-priced areas e.g. Kits
- Low overhead allows for unique retail businesses (e.g. repurposing Olympic goods)
- Emerging area
- Looking to the future
- Saw demand and opportunity for growth
- Strathcona felt undiscovered
- Filling a business niche not currently met (fitness) that caters to growing demographic that is seeking this type of service
- Love services and amenities to support business (e.g. restaurants)
- Attraction of heritage, history of affluence and cultural aspects
- Business has been used to preserve buildings
- Stimulating environment
- Meaningful work

- Capacity building
- Arts sector
- Key economic driver
- Build on successes here – love of the City, galleries, etc.
- Affinity of business to DTES
- Sense of community
- grittiness
- Nostalgia in Gastown
- Woodward's
- Diversity of businesses
- Architecture and interior design
- Trade-only showrooms
- Independent businesses - Concentration of design and creative industry – wanted to tap into this sector
- Ship-building – SPAN contract and their suppliers
- Energy sector
- The people
- Diverse and fabulous people
- Wanted to be where the locals hang out
- Heart and soul found here
- Did a small business course here – mentors and networks grew from here
- Heritage/history of area and buildings, Sense of Community, Nostalgia, Diversity of businesses and people living here
- Area of Creative Businesses (fashion and arts), Area on the rise, fashion/design hub, heart and soul
- Lower/affordable rent

## **2. WHAT ARE THE CONSTRAINTS TO GROWING YOUR BUSINESS?**

- Bean Around the world- most of my customers are students or people who work in the offices, this limits my time that I can generate revenue- not a lot of people after offices hours buying stuff unlike other locations that aren't 9-5 dependent.
- Potluck- real estate, the exponentially growing real estate prices are a constraint to growth, and concerned it may get worse.
- Parking is a challenge, for staff and for visitors.
- The market is shrinking because the residential population (groceries and other stores have been leaving or have left) the Chinese community has moved away to Richmond. Parking issues, pay parking expensive, other areas have free parking.
- 32% parking tax in Vancouver puts us at a disadvantage, nowhere else has the transportation tax that high
- Safety, our staff and clients need to feel safe when they're coming to work, the streetscape needs to be safe. We've also seen a sharp increase in property taxes due to a sharp rise in the assessment, 60% increase in the amount of tax we have to pay because of the assessments, which have been way higher.

20% social housing for a re-zoning for a small industrial individual business space is restrictive, is also restrictive

- Safety, my staff need to feel safe as well. 6:00 AM and 9:00 PM are still times where it gets dodgy. We need walkby, the property taxes are also going up – “skyrocketing” in fact.
- Nothing is really constricting us, our business is BC –wide even international so the bigger macroeconomic issues affect us more than local.
- Retail spaces are filled with social services and other non-profit service providers so much of our potential business space, retail footprint, have been displaced by institutional uses. Wasted opportunity for retail corridor, once you hit 300 block it’s all service providers “dead block”
- Demographics/clientele
- Most customers are students or low-income – limits hours of core business operations; neighbourhood is 9 to 5, shuts down early
- Challenges with alignment of local clientele (predominantly low income) and business opportunities
- Residential demographic in Chinatown is changing; older businesses don’t have the same client base so market is shrinking
- Exponentially increasing real estate values and rents
- Decreases opportunities for growth due to increasing fixed costs
- Property tax increases especially in areas typically considered less impacted by drastically changing values (e.g. one property in industrial area saw its assessment increase by 60% in one year; another saw its assessed value increase in one year by \$80K over its purchase price)
- Risk is this changes the look and feel of the neighbourhood
- Need low-cost stores for young start-up entrepreneurs
- Rent is key factor in determining a viable business – is rent control a solution?
- Parking
- In Strathcona, predominantly free but very limited for staff and visitors
- In Chinatown, pay parking compared to Richmond, which has more free parking
- Vancouver has 32% parking tax that other municipalities don’t
- Lack of parking for destination shoppers
- Some areas have more parking with street parking and parkades but costly
- Safety
- For clients and staff, particularly for businesses operating early in morning (6am) and/or later at night (after 9pm); general demographic of foot traffic
- Theft of goods from stores
- VPD patrols stolen goods – street market at Carrall
- Criminal justice system
- Concentrating people with challenges and criminal background in a small area
- Lighting
- Street lamps Hastings to Pender
- On streets, in lanes

- Maintenance
- Not enough in some areas
- Zoning and regulations
- Zoning in DEOD is extremely restrictive (e.g. 20% social housing requirement for floor space greater than 1.0FSR), which limits growth
- Clarity of regulations so people /businesses know in advance of regulations before approaching City – currently, feels like there is too much discretion in interpretation of regulations
- Planning regulations that not only restrict business growth but also hinders business with clients
- Vancouver Agreement: special DTES zone was explored but no movement forward
- Need to streamline red tape e.g. permitting process
- Consider temporary permit pending like NYC – allows for business to operate while permanent permit is being processed
- Current permitting process is time consuming
- Cost to businesses, we're passing up on projects – what is the economic opportunity costs to not doing those enterprises?
- Consider a business advocate role at the City especially for new entrepreneurs, to help lead people through regulations
- Lack of continuity in retail spaces in Strathcona
- However, also concerns with appropriateness of an extensive retail district in Strathcona – economic development needs to be appropriate for neighbourhood
- Need grassroots approach to address issues but also to identify opportunities – allow organic growth from “first principles”
- Perception
- Hostility towards new businesses
- Outside perception that new businesses are not welcome, protests against new developments
- Perception of gentrification
- Enough restaurants and cafes in Gastown – opposite in Chinatown and Hastings corridor
- Dumping e.g. mattresses
- Draws vectors to the building
- Cleanliness matters
- Lack of balanced residential community
- Majority is for low income or hard to house
- 80% market, 20% low income
- Concentration of social services, deadens the streetscape especially east of Main and Hastings
- Management of SROs – gangs, prostitution, open drug use and sales
- Poor quality low income housing units and not necessarily locals living there
- Attitude of City employees
- Changed minds of inspectors
- Perception that business owners have money and the time, lives are more flexible than they really are
- Patio, new parking for expansion

- Education for new City staff
- Perception of area
- Lack of balanced residential
- Majority = low income
- Safety and security
- Hostility
- Vandalism
- Gentrification
- Rents are going up
  - a. Property taxes going up
- Need low cost, small stores for young people
  - a. Risk of losing Gastown feel
- More restaurants needed in Chinatown & Hastings
  - a. Enough in Gastown
- Misunderstandings around the Zoning in the area (Hastings)
- Permit process issues (city process is inefficient)
  - a. Ex. Patio's
- Challenges of cleanliness – dumping in back alleys
  - a. Street hygiene (dumpsters, rodents, rats, mice)
- Lighting of Street Lamps
  - a. Slow response time from the city
  - b. City maintenance lacking
- Gangs, prostitution, open drug use and sales
  - a. Criminal justice system is failing
- Theft, shop lifting, security, customer safety
- Parking Issues
- Attitude of City Employees
- Keeping employees

### **3. HOW CAN WE SUPPORT EXISTING BUSINESSES AND ATTRACT NEW BUSINESSES THAT CREATE LOCAL ECONOMIC RETURNS FOR THE DTES?**

- Zoning: how can the city be creative with zoning to allow multiple uses of space? Especially for the local clientele, if you can have light industrial, office and some retail in the same square footage rather than just one.
- We need really clear rules about spaces, discretion can be a problem, make it clear that we have a type of zoned space that can have mixed use- industrial, office and retail for example.
- We do have discretionary powers that will continue here, as the area is a unique place and may have unique tools, we may be able to change the rules.
- For years when the Vancouver Agreement came along we tried to put forward the idea of a special zone, that would not allow a block to disintegrate, and it went nowhere. So it's good that people are looking at this again now.
- There is a strong group of leadership here, working on economic revitalization from the ground up. The question should always be "what does the neighbourhood need?" identify leaders and identify needs, and

then enable them. The first principles as Beasley used to say, but needs to be bottom up. Keep the money in the area, how many times can it make the rounds in the area. The leaders here need to lead and get buy-in from the city.

- One time we met with a manager at development services and we saw a chart with polygons on it that was detailing just how complicated it is to get 1 permit passed, permit facilitation, streamline this.
- Other cities have things like temporary permits, a restaurant or pub can operate with a “permit pending” or “
- While we’re talking economic development we have to be careful not to consider retail as the end all be all, we don’t necessarily need another retail zone, what other sort of ecosystem can we create that generates business opportunities and jobs, “makers” not just sellers, are important too especially in an area like Strathcona that has so much light industrial space.
- Streamlining permits and development
- Low rent is so crucial, we can’t let the low rents get away from us, need to keep this area competitive. Up in Kitsilano people can’t keep businesses open because the rents are so high. Can we have some kind of rent control? Similar to some cities that have residential rent control? When I opened my coffee shop I did everything I was told I needed to do and then another surprise landed in my lap when they told me I needed yet another thing and it was really putting me in a difficult position as a small business owner. Permit facilitation.
- So can we put in place a special “zone” that we can enable the type of growth that we need here
- We need consistency from the city, depending on who a business gets in touch with a permit can take a couple of weeks or can take months and months.
- The city’s various departments don’t see things in the same way and so they don’t make exceptions for social enterprises or community focused non-profits and businesses
- In order to attract new businesses and retain existing ones we need affordable rents and other supports.
- We need a clear vision so we can all paddle in the same direction. Zoning and bylaws follow that.
- Get rid of the zoning altogether perhaps? What would this do? Loosen it up, get people to move into industrial areas? The number of rules currently set in place are the problem. You can’t plan for character.
- The allocation to businesses is unfair right now, residential class 1 development eclipsed the total value of class 6 yet the allocation is still the same. Densification is causing rents to skyrocket, no public process looking at this, nobody telling the tenants that this is happening. Densification education is needed. Density rezoning is killing tenants. Paying for 11 unused storeys of class 6 it is totally unfair and the tenants get the shaft.
- I’m really concerned about the mom’s and pop’s get pushed out, economic Darwinism, skyrocketing rents because of speculation and the assessment process.
- It’s not fair to be charged for potential “air space” above your business that you aren’t using.
- The City could be more supportive of the BIAs on the ground, a lot of things could be farmed out to BIAs or we could develop more services in partnership with the BIAs
- Credits or financial support for specific programs to help local residents be employed so that the business operator doesn’t have to take that on, you can have supports and services for Human Resources needs that, PEOPLE SUPPORT for employment, ongoing, not just support for businesses.
- Increased support and improved communications from City:

- Frustration with lack of support from City especially on initiatives that seem to align with City policies or vision e.g. starting social enterprises, Emporium
- Lack of communication and cohesion between departments
- More support by City for BIAs particularly as BIAs already provide many services to the business community
- Clearer vision for communities, then ensure bylaws, zoning support this vision
- Relax/revise/eliminate certain rules to allow people to start new, creative businesses
- Incubate young entrepreneurs
- Low rents to help them get off the ground
- The “parking spot” for new artists, writers, etc.
- Pop up stores for new designers, shared spaces
- Area promotion
- Events to promote other local businesses
- Cross-marketing and cross-branding with neighbours
- Eco-industrial networks
- Offering mentorship to new businesses
- Explain the dynamics of the neighbourhood
- How to “give back” to the local residents
- See how they can fit in to the uniqueness here
- Local networks
- Local purchasing
- Charitable contributions to the local organisations
- Discounts for local sports groups
- Buying from local producers (often further east) – SoleFood Farm – costs more but feels good
- Business passport idea
- Supporting small business abroad
- Importing
- Looking for local suppliers/producers
- Other
- Beehives on rooftops
- Incubate young entrepreneurs (rent our areas with low daily rent)
  - Pop-up shop within existing businesses (shared space)
- Be available to answer questions/mentorship
- Buy local (costs more, but feels good)
- Opportunity for Cross-Marketing
- Discounts for area businesses, residents
- Business Passport (map of businesses in the area)
- Missed population: residents who do home craft and are lacking business knowledge

#### 4. HOW CAN WE ATTRACT THE KINDS OF BUSINESSES THAT CREATE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES THAT MATCH THE CURRENT SKILL SETS OF DTES RESIDENTS?

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- Credits or financial support for specific programs to help local residents be employed so that the business operator doesn't have to take that on, you can have supports and services for Human Resources needs that, PEOPLE SUPPORT for employment, ongoing, not just support for businesses.
- Recognition that businesses need people supports to support local employment
- supports for staff through third party organisation and not by business, which would be too onerous
- Support must be ongoing and not start and finish
- There has been a loss of many of these types of support programs, thereby decreasing the opportunities to get people into the work force
- Lack of support from the Provincial government for employment programs
- Supports for potential local employees e.g. language skills, etc.
- Training for retail staff
- Businesses may not be the best vehicle to support employment of DTES residents; most businesses can't employ people who need support
- Businesses already have challenges with growth that is required to be able to employ more people
- Retaining employees is a challenge
- Career development
- High turnover
- Looking for longevity and commitment
- People want to be close to where they work, affordable housing for staff that work here
- Need to address mental health and addiction issue
- Require "unrelenting" mental health and addiction supports, stronger police presence to deter anti-social behaviour and decrease predators
- Perhaps better to utilise existing programs/organisations instead e.g. Mission Possible
- City could provide more support to social enterprises and BIA partnerships instead
- Develop support at policy level
- Need more collaboration with Province and other levels of government to support employment
- Would like to see the City be able to influence employment policy on a broader scale
- City to create conditions to support grassroots initiatives and not choose winners and losers
- What kind of structure/mechanism can be available to match potential employees with employers
- Need a health diversity of businesses to attract new businesses and provide low tech, low barrier job opportunities
- Other
- Exposure and relationship building e.g. connections between BIAs and community centres; gives an idea of what's out there
- Tap into seniors labour pool!
- Need to know what the current skill sets are
- Attract businesses by having housing that will be affordable to your staff



- Need to market to those who are looking for jobs
- Give them Support:
  - a. Language training (for those with language barriers), Build skill sets

## 5. WHAT ARE THE SUPPLY CHAIN NEEDS FOR LOCAL BUSINESSES AND WHAT ASPECTS OF THIS CAN BE SOURCED LOCALLY?

- The food system for us, including composting, how can we create a closed loop for
- We don't really have a clear picture of supply chain needs, maybe we should research what things local businesses need, what are they buying?
- I would rather designate zones that clearly define what types of areas certain types of businesses will naturally gravitate to (clustering, or agglomeration)
- We have an imbalance of supply and demand, 10 barbershops in one area, too much clustering!
- Some types of businesses like to cluster, how can we enable this?
- The BIA can help attract businesses to the area once we have a clearly defined partnership with the city around "what type of zone" is this? What does it say on the map?
- Bob- VEC should be at this table right now, VEC is a part of this and will continue to be engaged, has been in communication
- Urban farms for produce
- However, such operations typically have higher price points due to higher overhead costs
- Therefore, need to create more closed-loop systems to decrease input costs for such businesses and allow them to provide more competitive goods
- Source locally as much as possible
- Marketing, printers, etc. e.g. Mills Basic
- Shipping and receiving
- Recycling and waste disposal – local stations
- Green Waste Challenge
- Learning exchange between BIAs e.g waste management, neighbourhood composting
- Unclear of specific supply chain needs and B2B opportunities; need help to develop procurement policies - don't need any more studies though as enough have been done
- Create a clear vision for business districts e.g. manufacturing, food processing, etc.
- Clustering/conglomeration
- May also emerge residually e.g. Chinatown herbal shops
- Some industries may be better for clustering than others; City could facilitate this but shouldn't create this
- Branding and marketing in partnership with the City to help businesses identify clusters e.g. Strathcona Green Zone on City website maps
- Update economic topography from 2002 report by VEC
- New social enterprise opportunities
- Industrial laundry (for tablecloths, etc.), daily pickups
- Alcohol – locally produced vodka, etc.

- Bureaucracy to open a distillery is a HUGE challenge
- Communications and practices in mixed use commercial and residential buildings
- Food waste > graduate research project
- Need external entrepreneurial champions AND an internal (City) champion to facilitate the development of these new businesses
- Authorise staff to do this!
- Industrial Laundry (for restaurant uniforms)
  - Daily pickups and drop offs
  - Can employ local residents (creating jobs)
  - B2B Process
- Alcohol/Liquor Licensing – bureaucracy is too hard to get over
- External entrepreneurial champions and an internal (city) champion
  - Empower and facilitate new businesses
- Use local marketing, printers, stationary
- Recycling and Waste Disposal/Stations
  - Food Waste
  - Packaging
  - Neighborhood Composting Areas

## **6. WHAT PUBLIC REALM IMPROVEMENTS ARE REQUIRED TO CREATE A SUITABLE ENVIRONMENT FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES? WHERE SHOULD THEY BE IMPLEMENTED?**

- Pioneer square model in Seattle, they took away the garbage bins and opened up that space for incubator spaces, smaller shops, small businesses in the lane then become feasible.
- Some of the restrictions around vendors, as a person with something to sell, could be lifted. Animating the streets with small – sidewalk vendors.
- Lock boxes in Paris along the Seine where artists and craft dealers could sell special small batch stuff, with native art and local craft makers, social enterprises could really take advantage or little things like this- legal street vending.
- One of the challenges is that there is so much concrete, barbed wire, fences and bars, and this neighbourhood could really be softened up by some greenery and less bars and less intense physical environment.
- More public art, more murals, the graffiti is super cool. People come down here to look at it.
- Respect needs to be taken between “carts” or other mobile businesses, and the brick and mortar businesses.
- We need help changing the perception of the area, insurance providers, shoppers, media, and we need help softening up the hard appearance of the area, bars, broken windows etc.
- Awnings are in awful shape in some stretches, façade improvement funds.
- The permitting process was really difficult with the façade grant program at BOB, great program but the city bureaucracy
- We could create an Awning social enterprise to create local jobs and fix these awnings.
- Expanding the notion of what Community Benefits Are, public realm investments, what do we need that can be included in CBAs.

- We need support dealing with difficult residents, difficult situations, and HxBIA is implementing a service with Mission Possible that I am excited about that employs local residents who have been given training for these situations, stuff like this is really helpful for us
- Hastings Street is a significant street, needs to be carefully planned. This CPR overpass on Powell- how does it fit into anyone's plans? The Viaducts? Are these going to really impact our plans here?
- Support with Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design would be really helpful to us. Taking those dumpsters out, lighting, softening up the streetscapes and alleys with foliage etc. Animating spaces.
- Improvement in safety
- Improvement dealing with low level anti-social behaviour e.g. peer-based community patrols to supplement VPD
- Support and implement CPTED principles
- Street lighting
- Public washrooms that work and people feel comfortable using (e.g. with attendants)
- Strategies to improve movement of people and pedestrian experience
- Improve pedestrian experience especially on major routes to encourage more people and help create more eyes on street e.g. railings on Clark/Hastings intersection, more green space
- Concerns with thoroughfare on Hastings and Powell
- Increase traffic after Powell overpass and viaduct removal?
- Little enforcement of speeding
- Restrict cycling on certain routes where cycling is not well supported? E.g. Powell
- More taxis, especially in evening, where they are needed (to minimise neighbourhood complaints)
- Access to the water, especially @CRAB Park
- Two way streets on Cordova and Powell – see Leanore for story (?)
- Limiting size of transport vehicles on commercial thoroughfares
- Road maintenance e.g. Water Street
- More patios for restaurants
- Streamline the permitting for this!!
- Liquor policy issues from licenced to unlicenced areas
- New micro business opportunities to activate streetscape
- Pocket markets and vending (not necessarily food vendors)
- Currently very restrictive
- Could create public realm improvements e.g. busking, artist vending
- Seattle – removed dumpsters in lanes, which opened up opportunities for entrepreneurs to open businesses at lower costs
- Need to be careful about not competing with bricks and mortar businesses
- Do away with public street vending on Hastings St.
- Where would vendors go?
- Maybe on a City-owned lot (off the sidewalk?) with a covered area



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- Too much concrete, barbed wire and fencing – difficult, intense environment
- Increase green space to increase opportunities for public space ownership through upkeep, create green jobs and training
- Change perceptions e.g. removing fencing will increase insurance costs – misguided perceptions by insurance company
- Blood Alley Square upgrade
- More community gardens on City-owned spaces
- Attract bees, etc.
- Resurrect or increase support by City for awning and façade improvements
- Some businesses claimed that portion they had to pay using local business for new awning was more expensive even with subsidy
- Perhaps a social enterprise could be utilised
- Maintain consistency in the heritage fabric
- Keep this look and feel
- Strengthen social networks
- Childcare and schools?
- Neighbourhood composting for food waste
- Other
- Disconnect between City and Province on tax assessments – incongruous policy with current use
- Neighborhood Composting Areas
- Street Lighting
- More Taxi's
- Road Maintenance
  - a. Ex. Water Street
- Limiting larger vehicles on certain streets
- Blood Alley Square Upgrade
- Public Washrooms that work and people feel comfortable using
  - a. Have staff, attendants, well maintained, clean, safe
- Public Market of Stolen Goods on Main Street and Hastings Street needs to be eliminated
  - a. But where do these people go? This is just a symptom, need a solution first.
  - b. Maybe move to a leased empty lot and away from the sidewalk with a covered area (for safety and perception from locals and tourists)
- Need Restaurant Patio's

- a. To create life in the neighborhood
  - b. Streamline the permitting for this?
  - c. Liquor license issues
- Keep consistency with Heritage Fabric of the city (look, feel and flavor)
- Improve empty lots and city spaces
  - a. Community gardens, bees
- Schools, Daycares, Childcare, Community Centre
- Access to the water, Crab Park
- Make Cordova and Powell two-way traffic street