Summary of the Open Houses for 395 Kingsway (former Biltmore Hotel): Wednesday, January 8, 2014 at St. Patrick's Regional High School and Saturday, January 11, 2014 at the Native Education Centre

Both the January 8 and January 11 Biltmore open houses were facilitated by Dianna Bulley from Context Research. Dianna thanked people for coming and introduced presenters from the City of Vancouver, BC Housing, RainCity Housing, and Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH). One hundred and nineteen residents from the Mount Pleasant community attended the Wednesday, January 8 open house, and thirty-three residents attended the Saturday, January 11 open house.

Chris Taulu, Chair of the Biltmore Working Group, provided welcoming remarks and introduced the Working Group.

Brenda Prosken, General Manager of Community Services, City of Vancouver, provided an overview of housing and homelessness in Vancouver and the important role projects like 395 Kingsway play in achieving Council's goal of ending homelessness.

Fergus McCann, Senior Manager, Public Affairs, BC Housing (Wednesday) and Dominic Flanagan, Director, Housing Programs, BC Housing (Saturday) provided an overview of the 395 Kingsway.

Bill Briscall, Communications Manager, RainCity Housing and Bronwen Dixon, Biltmore Manager, RainCity Housing, provided an overview of the management and operations of the Biltmore.

Heidi Schmidt, Social Worker, Raven Song Clinic, VCH, provided an overview of the types of supports that would be provided to 395 Kingsway tenants.

Attendees moved into small groups of approximately eight people, each with a facilitator and note-taker, to discuss questions in three discussion areas:

1. **Discussion Area #1: Managing the Biltmore** - What should all the project partners consider related to managing the site?
2. **Discussion Area #2: Biltmore Tenants** - What should the project partners consider related to the tenants residing at the site? *Additional question: In what ways can tenants contribute positively to the community?*
3. **Discussion Area #3: The Mount Pleasant Community** - What should project partners and the community do to ensure a good relationship between the Biltmore site and the surrounding community? *Additional question: What ideas do you have to ensure a safe community?*

Following the small group discussions, facilitators reported out highlights of the discussion in their group. Over the two events, about 350 comments were given in response to the discussion questions. Some recurring thoughts that emerged include:

- Lack of consultation and transparency about project
    - Renters not receiving information materials that were mailed
- Better communication needed
- The community needs to be involved earlier

- Project is a valuable opportunity for residents
- Concern about safety, property security, vulnerable populations (children, seniors, women), property values, public disorder, loitering
- Participants wanted clarification on the Vancouver Police Department's role in monitoring and responding to issues at the Biltmore once it opened (marked vehicles, provide training)
- Concern that the improvements the neighbourhood has undergone will be reversed by this project, references to "Old Biltmore", DTES
- Concern about locating this type of housing above two liquor establishments
- Concern about the cabaret – interaction between Biltmore residents and cabaret patrons; noise level impacts on Biltmore tenants
- Concern about existing homelessness in neighbourhood
- Concern about traffic safety, especially at the intersection by the project (visitors, etc.)
- Desire to organize an open house or block party to facilitate interaction between the Biltmore tenants and other Mount Pleasant residents
- Want assurances that sufficient supports and common/gathering/amenity space exists for Biltmore tenants
- Desire for open and ongoing communication - knowing who to contact if there are concerns was deemed critical

Discussion Area #1: Managing the Biltmore
- Need to ensure meal provision and/or sufficient food preparation facilities exist – concern that only one meal per day will be provided to tenants.
- Interest in understanding tenant selection process
    o Criteria: background, location, mix of low income and substance users
    o Questions around tenant turnover rate
    o Consideration of whether or not tenant would fit well in the Biltmore environment
- Want to ensure information is provided to the community (i.e. on a website, contact number list, annual reports – success and celebrations)
- Need to better understand RainCity policies in particular around drug use, visitors, bad tenants/eviction, etc.
- Ensure staff are available and approachable
- Concern about substance use: ensure sufficient, diverse types of support– i.e. health (addictions/therapy/clinicians), employment, etc.
- Concern about provision of common/gathering space --> community building within Biltmore
- Working with partners, like the Vancouver Police Department (VPD) and Community Advisory Committee (CAC)
- Installation of security cameras on site
- Concern about storage space
- Activities for tenants? Computers? Community concern about loiters
- Consider phased move-in, instead of all 90 units simultaneously
- Concern about fire escape and safety

IDEAS:
- Creating a community garden at the cul-de-sac

- Having an open house prior to tenants moving in for Mount Pleasant residents to see the facilities

Discussion Area #2: Biltmore Tenants:
What should the project partners consider related to the tenants residing at the site?
- Consider how the cabaret may impact tenants
- Establish a framework or guidelines or a code of conduct regarding visitors, drug use, etc.
- Focus on community building – programming, partnering with community, provision of physical space

In what ways can tenants contribute positively to the community?
- Be involved with and play a proactive role in community building
- Clarify amongst community residents that Biltmore tenants are paying rent
- Be conscientious of location of substance use, if a substance user, and that there is a preference that it be conducted safely indoors
- Help to maintain the site and self-police each other
- Help to identify community projects that could benefit the broader Mount Pleasant community

Discussion Area #3: Mount Pleasant Community:
- Explore partnerships:
  - Passes for Biltmore tenants to use community centre
  - Local experts providing skills/training to Biltmore residents
  - Meal provision or fridge donation
  - Volunteer exchange
- Potential community partners: Mount Pleasant Community Centre, Vancouver Recovery Club, Boys and Girls Club, Parent Advisory Committee from the Florence Nightingale Elementary School, local Business Improvement Associations (BIA)
- Business/commercial/BIA involvement and input desired
- Safety and security – block watch/beat/lighting/needle pick-up
- Community building - Welcome residents and explore ways to enable different groups to get to know each other
  - Coffee bar, open houses, block parties, public events
- Learn more about project/tenants could result in a more positive opinion, as well as more support for project
- Create liaison positions between different community partners and Biltmore

Following the reporting-out period, Bill Briscall, RainCity Housing, provided information on the Community Advisory Committee and invited participants to sign up if they wanted to become a member or if they simply wanted to be emailed minutes of the Committee meetings. The session closed with Dianna thanking everyone for their participation.

Next Steps
- Bill Briscall followed up with individuals interested in joining the Community Advisory Committee and the first meeting was held Tuesday, January 28th. Meeting minutes will be posted on RainCity's website www.raincityhousing.org

- Information from the community information meetings will be used to finalize the Terms of Reference for the Community Advisory Committee and shape the way Biltmore tenants and staff interacts with the larger community.
- For more information on the project, visit vancouver.ca/biltmore