

VanRIMS No.: 08-3000-11

May 24, 2017

Dear Mayor Robertson and members of City Council

Re: Rezoning Application for 105 Keefer Street

The Seniors' Advisory Committee is a civic agency appointed by Vancouver City Council to provide advice on matters presently under consideration which affect older adults and their families. The re-zoning application for 105 Keefer Street is of particular interest to the Committee given the serious implications it may have for seniors' housing affordability and liveability in Chinatown.

We have heard and considered a wide variety of opinions on this application, and discussed it at length during our regular June 17, 2016 meeting. While the Committee recognizes the need to increase the availability of different types of housing throughout the city, we remain concerned about the impact that this proposed development will have on housing affordability and overall liveability for seniors in Chinatown.

Our primary concerns are the following:

1. Of the 25 social housing units proposed for the second floor, we are concerned that there are an insufficient number of units designated for very low-income seniors. This is of great concern given the high proportion of seniors in Chinatown living at or below the poverty line and who are at risk of homelessness.
2. Dedicated cultural spaces are critical for fostering social connectedness—a priority concern for our Committee and the Social Planning and Policy. While we welcome the dedicated seniors' cultural space proposed for the ground floor of this development, we are unsure whether it will be affordable for groups that would most benefit from its use.
3. This proposed development represents the beginning of gentrification in Chinatown. While gentrification has its benefits, it also comes with costs. In particular, we are concerned that developments like this will increasingly displace affordable, culturally appropriate amenities for low-income, monolingual seniors, such as Chinese grocery stores and pharmacies.
4. Although commenting on architectural design is not generally within the Committee's purview, we echo the concern that the current proposal remains out of scale with neighbouring buildings and landmarks—both in style and size—and is not adequately sensitive to the historic nature of Chinatown. This threatens the unique character of

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this nationally designated historic site and diminishes the sense of place and belonging that is so important for the well being of seniors.

As you may recall, Council approved a motion in October 8, 2013 that the City work toward seeking World Health Organization designation as a "Global Age-Friendly City." Among the requirements for seeking this designation, Vancouver must ensure that there is adequate and affordable housing for low-income seniors; that services and amenities are culturally-appropriate; and that seniors feel socially connected and integrated with their communities.

In its current form, this proposed development—and the future developments it will likely inspire—appears to be inconsistent with the characteristics of an age-friendly city. We therefore cannot support the proposal at this time and we recommend that it undergo further revision to address the concerns we have described.

More generally, we recommend that the City consider steps to mitigate the potentially negative impact of gentrification in Chinatown, such as commercial-non-profit partnerships to create culturally-appropriate, multi-use facilities in the area, and preserving the character of Chinatown.

Yours very truly,

Colleen McGuinness,
Chair, Seniors' Advisory Committee

Yours truly,



Colleen McGuinness, Chair
Seniors' Advisory Committee

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