

MEMORANDUM

April 8, 2011

TO: Mayor & Council

CC: Penny Ballem, CITY MANAGER
Sadhu Johnston, DEPUTY CITY MANAGER
Mairi Welman, DIRECTOR COMMUNICATIONS
Marg Coulson, CITY CLERK
David McLellan, GENERAL MANAGER OF COMMUNITY SERVICES GROUP
Brenda Proskan, DEPUTY GENERAL MANAGER, COMMUNITY SERVICES GROUP
Brent Toderian, DIRECTOR OF PLANNING
Celine Mauboules, SENIOR PLANNER

FROM: Abi Bond, Assistant Director of Housing Policy

SUBJECT: DTES Housing Plan Update (with focus on Chinatown)

The intent of this memo is to provide further information for Council related to housing objectives for the Downtown Eastside, including Chinatown (HA-1 and HA-1A), and to provide a status update on the DTES Housing Plan as it relates to Chinatown following the Public Hearing on the Historic Area Height Review (Chinatown) of March 17th, April 5th, and April 7th, 2011.

Highlights of the 2005 Housing Plan for the DTES

- The DTES will remain the primary community for low-income singles in the City, while creating a mixed income community that can support a healthy economy for all residents.
- The intent of the plan is to maintain 10,000 units of low-income housing, increasing the quality of these units over time through 1-for-1 replacement of SROs with social housing;
- The Plan encourages affordable housing in other parts of the city, region and province, and;
- Encourages the development of market housing - both moderate cost rental and owner occupied with an emphasis on *affordability*. Most market housing is expected to occur in Gastown, Chinatown and Victory Square;
- The Plan provides direction on monitoring the pace of development of market housing, to ensure it keeps pace with the development of social housing.

- The SRA By-law was enacted in 2003 as a tool to manage the rate of change of the single room accommodation stock over time.
- The Plan recommends the City purchase one SRO per year, and urge senior levels of government to restore funding for the purchase and upgrade of SROs. Since 2007, the City has purchased 2 SROs in the DTES, and the province 23 in the DTES and Downtown Core.
- The Plan recommends the City purchase at least one site per year for the development of new social housing and urge senior government to restore funding for the construction and operation of social housing. The City and Province under a 2007 MOU are developing 14 sites for social and supportive housing throughout the City. Four of these sites are within the DTES (>450 new units).

Housing Mix Projections

Housing Type	July 2010 stock figures	Plan Projection -2014
SRO	3,770	4,000
Non-market	6,480	5,900
Market Housing	3,800	4,000
Community Care/Group Residence	850	1,100

Recent data from mid-2010 shows that market housing completions have occurred at a faster rate than projected by the Plan, we are only 200 units away from the 2014 projection level. Non-market unit completions have also occurred at a faster rate than expected, we are nearly 600 units ahead of the 2014 projection level.

Highlights of the Plan - Chinatown Sub Area

The focus for this area as outlined in the Plan is market housing (both ownership and rental). Due to the small lot sizes and heritage constraints, the Plan did not anticipate the ability to meet the 1-for-1 replacement policy within Chinatown.

The Chinatown Vision (2002) as referenced in the Plan identified the following directions:

- Encourage market housing
- Improve living conditions in the existing hotels
- Encourage affordable rental housing
- Explore possibilities of housing in the upper floors of buildings with commercial storefronts

Chinatown* Housing - all types

Housing Type	Current Housing Mix - March 2011	'Possible Unit Mix' by 2014 outlined in Plan
SRO rooms	465 (0)	400
Non-market units	334 (44)	300
Market condos - ownership units	483 (218)	400
Market rental units	197 (33)	300
<i>Total Units</i>	<i>1,479 (298)</i>	<i>1,400</i>

*the Sub Area boundaries of Chinatown as defined in the Housing Plan include a CD-1 zone, immediately outside HA-1. The number of units located within this CD-1 are included in the totals above, and are also broken out as indicated in brackets above.

This table indicates that to date we have maintained a higher number of SROs than anticipated and have achieved a greater number of non-market units in the area than originally projected. We have exceeded our owner-occupied projections and remain 100 units short on the market rental housing projections.

SRO rents

At the time of the 2009 Survey of Low-Income Housing we were able to obtain rental data for 10 buildings. Approximately 44% of rooms in Chinatown were renting at or below the shelter allowance of \$375/month. This compares with just 36% of units for the entire DTES area. A spot check of some of the buildings in the area shows rents continue to increase. Preliminary planning for the 2011 Survey of Low-Income Housing the Downtown Core is underway.

The table below is an update (March 2011) on rental rates for Chinatown SROs where we were able to obtain information:

Chinatown SRO Listing					
Name	Zoning	Address	Open rooms (2009 Survey)	2009 Survey Rents	Current Rents
West Hotel ^H	HA-1	488 Carrall	98	\$400-525	\$425-550
Pacific Rooms	HA-1A	507 Main	30	\$375-385	\$400-410
New Sun Ah Hotel* ^H	HA-1	100 E Pender	42	\$360-390	\$375-400
Asia Hotel* ^H	HA-1	139 E Pender	35	\$385-400	no data available
Arno Rooms ^H	HA-1A	291 E Georgia	34	\$425-450	\$450-500
Keefer Rooms ^H	HA-1A	222 Keefer	45	\$380	\$390-450
May Wah Hotel* ^H	HA-1	258 E Pender	105	\$375	\$375
	HA-1A	221 E Georgia	14	\$375-500	no data available
Lung Jen Benevolent*	HA-1A	240 Keefer	4	\$200-280	no data available
Chinese Freemasons* ^H	HA-1	116 E Pender	7	\$90-230	no data available
Creekside	HA-1A	796 Main	22	n/a	no data available
	HA-1A	626-628 Main	7	n/a	no data available
Pender Place ^H	HA-1	228 E Pender	23	n/a	no data available

*indicates those SROs run by Chinese Benevolent Societies

^H - Heritage status

It is possible that as Chinatown evolves we may be able to achieve a higher level of non-market housing than originally anticipated in this sub area. The 1-for-1 replacement policy is an area wide goal for the DTES as a whole, but more non-market units landed in Chinatown would take pressure off other major areas intended for SRA replacement such as the DEOD and M-1 Hastings Corridor.

On January 20, 2011 Council directed the City Manager to strike a committee to enhance and accelerate a DTES local area plan and to develop a clear strategy to implement the existing Council approved DTES Housing Plan. The Terms of Reference for this work are currently being developed. Staff together with a committee would be tasked with developing a strategy to implement the following: a review of the existing plan; mapping out progress in implementing the plan; broad community input in the City's Housing & Homelessness Strategy; and laying out a plan to bring this to fruition. Chinatown is a part of the 2005 DTES Housing Plan, and will be included in any review and further implementation of the Plan.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me, or Andrea Gillman (604-873-7542).

Abi Bond
Assistant Director of Housing Policy

tel: 604.873.7670
fax: 604.871.6488
abigail.bond@vancouver.ca