

NOTICE OF COUNCIL MEMBERS' MOTION

6. Short Term Actions to Preserve and Expand Access to Mental Health Resources and Housing in Grandview-Woodlands

Submitted by: Councillor De Genova

WHEREAS

1. The Kettle Friendship Societyⁱ, is a non-profit organization, established approximately 40 years ago. The organization provides many resources and services, including a drop-in centre and supportive housing to individuals who experience mental health challenges and addiction. Indigenous people, seniors and homeless individuals are among the vulnerable and marginalized people served by this organization;
2. The Kettle Friendship Society has been operating at capacity for over a decade. The society partnered with Boffo Properties; a family-owned property development company long established in Grandview-Woodlands. With BC Housing included as a partner, the most recent proposal for the project was able to secure funding to provide fifty (50) non-market and affordable housing units, owned by The Kettle Society, a funding commitment rarely made by BC Housing at such an early stage of a project. The proposed 15-storey development also enabled an expanded drop-in centre for the Kettle Society;
3. Public consultation for the “Boffo Kettle Project” originally began in 2012. The Grandview Woodlands Citizens’ Assembly formally supported this project in their Final Report;
4. Vancouver City Council adopted The Grandview Woodlands Plan, on July 28, 2016. The development proposed by The Kettle Boffo Plan is referenced numerous times, including:

Subsection “Places: Commercial Drive”:

“Kettle Friendship Centre Society is a key community asset that has offered accessible social services, including key mental health supports, to residents living with mental illness for over 35 years. Given increasing demands for services, Kettle’s future plan is to redevelop their existing site, perhaps together with adjacent privately- and City-owned sites towards a larger facility to better meet the community needs. Where possible, the City aims to support this plan to increase access to low-barrier services.

For the purposes of this plan, this special site is defined as the area bounded by Venables Street, the Commercial Diversion, and Commercial Drive. This represents an overall area of about 0.3 hectares (0.75 acres). It is recognized that future redevelopment of this overall site could occur in a consolidated

manner that incorporates several properties (and could possibly include the City-owned land) or it could occur through a number of independent developments. The intent reflected in the plan policies is to ensure that this special site delivers - - as a minimum -- space for the expanded services of the Kettle Friendship Society, as well as 30 units of non-market, supportive housing”ⁱⁱ

Section 7.1.2 of the plan titled “Housing” also states in the “Policies” subsection, a further subsection “Support efforts to eliminate homelessness”, including: *“Enable the development of additional supportive housing in Grandview Woodland. Ensure financial viability through senior government funding and/ or provision of additional density subject to fit with neighbourhood context (e.g. proposed redevelopment of the Kettle Friendship Society Centre at 1725 Venables Street),”ⁱⁱⁱ*

5. June 2018, the applicant withdrew the project that was in the Rezoning Pre-Application stage. In a letter from The Kettle Society to Mayor and Council, Executive Director Nancy Keough stated, “we were unable to reach an agreement with the City on a path forward in terms of the City’s financial requirements;”^{iv}
6. July 25, 2018, Council unanimously passed the motion titled “Support for the Kettle Society and the City of Vancouver’s commitment to Resources for Mental Health, Ending Homelessness and Supportive Housing”^v, with direction to staff as follows:

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED

A. THAT Council affirm support for The Kettle Society as a non-profit organization that serves thousands of people annually and provides resources to individuals and families facing mental health issues and homelessness in the City of Vancouver.

B. THAT Council direct staff to work with The Kettle Society to consider potential opportunities for The Kettle Society to move forward with their longstanding plans to develop an expanded drop-in centre and at least 30 units of community integrated supportive housing for individuals struggling with mental health issues and homelessness in Vancouver;

7. Vancouver faces a homelessness and housing crisis and is in the midst of an overdose crisis. On the frontlines for both, The Kettle Friendship Society provides critical resources to some of the most vulnerable and marginalized people in the city;
8. Vancouver City Council received a letter from The Kettle Society on July 6, 2020, with an updated request. The letter also states, “The Kettle is a trusted partner of B.C. Housing and because of that can bring 50 new, core income homes to the city of Vancouver.” (Attached as Appendix A); and

9. Vancouver City Council unanimously supported recommendations by staff, in a report^{vi}, dated June 5, 2020, to award Community Housing Incentive Program (CHIP) Grants for the year 2020, organizations and amounts listed below:
- Finnish Canadian Rest Home Association “Finnish Care Home” - **\$890,000**;
 - Lee’s Benevolent Association of Canada “Lee’s Seniors’ Housing” **\$655,000**;
 - The Governing Council of the Salvation Army in Canada “Salvation Army” **\$910,000**;
 - Aboriginal Land Trust Society “ALT” “Lu’ma Aboriginal Housing Society” **\$6,255,000**.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

- A. THAT Council direct staff to approach, prioritize and work with The Kettle Society, and their partners, to revisit their most recent and desired proposal, planned for development at Venables Street and Commercial Drive, including an expanded drop-in mental health centre and 50 units of non-market housing to be owned by The Kettle Friendship Society, with funding from BC Housing, in the interest of moving forward.
- B. THAT Council direct staff to identify and allocate CHIP grants and/or any other option available, to meet the financial needs of the project and satisfy any financial contributions, the City of Vancouver requires for this project to proceed.
- C. THAT Council direct staff to provide monthly updates to Council on progress staff have made with The Kettle Friendship Society in the interest of moving forward on an application led by this non-profit organizations and their funding and development partners.

REFERENCES:

ⁱ The Kettle Society, *Who We Are/ History*. www.thekettle.ca/who-we-are/history/

ⁱⁱ City of Vancouver. July 2016. *Grandview Woodland Community Plan*. page 50.

www.vancouver.ca/files/cov/grandview-woodland-community-plan.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ City of Vancouver. July 2016. *Grandview Woodland Community Plan*. page 130.

www.vancouver.ca/files/cov/grandview-woodland-community-plan.pdf

^{iv} Keough, Nancy. 2018. *Letter to Vancouver City Council*. The Kettle Society and Kettle Boffo.

www.kettleboffo.com/letter-to-council/

^v De Genova, M. 2018. *Support for the Kettle Society and the City of Vancouver’s Commitment to Resources for Mental Health, Ending Homelessness and Supportive Housing*. Motion referred to Standing Committee on Policy and Strategic Priorities Meeting Date July 25, 2018.

www.council.vancouver.ca/20180725/documents/pspc16.pdf

^{vi} City of Vancouver. June 5, 2020. “Community Housing Program Incentive Grants” Report and Recommendations to Council. www.council.vancouver.ca/20200707/documents/r8.pdf

APPENDIX A:



July 6, 2020

To: City of Vancouver Mayor and Council

As you are aware, over the last 44 years, the Kettle Friendship Society has been working diligently on behalf of our Members and the broader community to create new homes for homeless and other vulnerable people such as those with mental illness and substance use challenges. We have been very successful, and to date we have created over 400 homes at 9 sites, housing hundreds of community members as well as providing countless supportive services to them on site (e.g. legal advocacy, ID clinic, meal programs, counselling, etc.). Increasingly we are being sought out as a partner of choice due to our successful history: the Street to Home Society has invited us to operate the first Recovery Cafe, and we are currently finalizing a decision on a site and preparing to launch the operations, both of which a private donor is funding for us.

Over the last eight years we have been working to leverage the property our Society and Members own at Venables and Commercial in order to provide even more housing, as well as to redevelop our drop-in center.

You will be aware that our original plan, which was suggested by a previous Council, was to partner with a small local family-owned developer (also suggested by the City) to re-develop our site into a combined non-market housing program and revitalized drop-in center. As plans were made to finalize this project with the City it became clear that the new financial contributions in the form of Community Amenity Agreement costs that the City required were not economic with the business model that has been created by our partner with us years before. We had to walk away from the project.

Although disappointing, the Kettle board and staff quickly pivoted to become solution oriented and work in partnership with the City on a new concept. This new project would entail the Society selling our current property at Venables and using that funding as a contribution to the City's development of a new facility behind our property (the parking lot property), specifically to fund a new community drop in center. The Kettle was also delighted to be the successful winner of an RFP for 30 new units of nonmarket housing from BC Housing, which they then extended to SO units in recognition of our experience. We are pleased to bring our SO units to the new project for Core income, vulnerable individuals. Most programs today are varying income mixes, but with our allocation we have been able to negotiate 100% Core income housing!





The Kettle Society

Strength through mental health

Extensive discussions have occurred related to that project and sadly we are also now at a point of having to potentially walk away from this arrangement because, again, additional costs that are being required of us by the City staff are not affordable to us.

The Kettle is bringing: 50 housing units, our \$3.5 million contribution from the sale of our property and a loan from BC Housing for the remaining costs for the drop-in centre (which Kettle will be responsible for repaying). But the City staff are asking for additional **\$3 million** to cover what are called "air rights parcel" related to our drop-in centre.

We simply don't have access to those types of funds. We will have to find a new solution for rebuilding our centre and locating our 50 units and are not sure if we will be able to stay in our neighbourhood, given the increasing costs of land.

But this was all in discussion before the COVID-19 pandemic hit. We are now in a different world.

We would like to propose an innovative solution to the City that would put the Council in a position of national-level leadership in the recovery of our communities from the devastating impacts of the COVID19 pandemic.

We would like to request that the City, as part of its pandemic emergency response program, direct staff to secure, from within its own budgets the \$3 million to cover the cost of the air rights parcel. We also request that in return for the Kettle providing the City with ALL revenue from the sale of our existing site next door, we be allowed to maintain ownership (not a lease) on the new drop in-centre we will be paying for.

The reality is that together we have a shovel ready projects with you that provides homes to over 50 people as well as much-needed services in the form of a drop-in centre.

The time is to do it is now. Although we appreciate the need for increased density, which was one of the goals the city had for their site, and to secure as much funding as possible from projects (although we'd suggest that extra funds from a not-for-profit are not necessarily a priority), we suggest that prioritizing that over the eminent threat to human health and safety that faces us with the lack of non-market housing for people at risk is no longer appropriate.

That is pre-COVID-19 thinking.

We are confident that that this Council is adapting quickly to the disaster we are all facing in COVID-19 and can pivot to prioritize differently.

Together we have all the factors for success at our disposal:





The Kettle Society

Strength through mental health

The Kettle is a trusted partner of BC Housing and because of that can bring 50 new, Core income homes to the City's project

We also are experienced and running programs like this. In fact, we've been feeding double the number of community members through this pandemic, often being one of the only open sites for people to safely be fed

We have a strong and committed Board with capital project experience

We have staff ready and able to move this project forward at the highest priority.

On March 20, 2020 the Globe and Mail's ran a piece that said "Response to COVID-19 emergency define Vancouver Mayor Kennedy Stewart's legacy". We agree - and think it will be a defining moment of leadership for the entire Council. We hope it is a chance for you to be leaders in showing other cities how you prioritize vulnerable people over longer term objectives such as densification and funding for parks and public art.

We are happy to meet with you at any time to provide additional details and discuss this matter with you.

Regards,

Jonathan Jackson CPA CA ICD.D
Chair, The Kettle Friendship Society

cc:

Shane Ramsey, CEO, BC Housing

Jim O'Dea, Terra Housing

