



Statement from the Punjabi Market Collective
Re: 105 Keefer St Development Application

Sunday, May 28th, 2023

As a historical South Asian cultural hub, the Punjabi Market Collective deeply values neighborhoods in Vancouver where communities can come together to access intangible heritage. Our organization is committed to establishing initiatives and advocating for policies that protect the cultural and economic prospects of legacy businesses within South Vancouver's Punjabi Market. Since its inception in 1970, the Punjabi Market has a long history of lobbying for cultural designation, revitalization efforts and economic protection. As such, our organization understands the importance of preserving cultural heritage in a city as dynamic and continuously developing as Vancouver.

Vancouver's cultural hubs, such as Chinatown and Punjabi Market, are home to many seniors who identify with the cultural assets and familiarity of these areas. Seniors belonging to racialized communities—one of the most vulnerable members of our population—often face additional barriers to accessing a respectable quality of life. Culturally relevant and affordable housing is often cited as a major challenge in this demographic. It is no secret that there is a housing crisis in Chinatown, with seniors living in precarious, unaffordable or temporary housing situations. The Vancouver Chinatown Affordable Seniors Housing Inventory (January 2023) highlights this gap, with an estimated number of 1590 Chinese seniors over the age of 65 living in this area, but only half the number of designated seniors living spaces in the Vancouver Chinatown and Downtown Eastside. With the rise of anti-Asian sentiment during the pandemic and increasing unaffordability, many senior residents have been displaced from their homes and legacy businesses in the area have begun to cease operations.

The current development proposal for 105 Keefer St, aside from a dedicated Senior's lounge, does not contain a plan for culturally suitable and sustainable housing for seniors. Given the prime location of the proposed building within Vancouver's Chinatown, there is potential for this application to address some of the concerning housing situations reported by advocates, residents and business owners in the market. Cultural heritage does not have an expiration date as is suggested by the mid-term, 10 year dedication of space in the building for 'cultural use', but the elders in Chinatown are a testimony to the living heritage in the area and deserve to age with their well-being and health as priority.



It is understood that this project is for profit. This project can also be for the people. Any developer with a sense of social responsibility would consider the needs of the community in which they are building and aim to build compromise. The PMC takes the same approach to projects in the area of Punjabi Market; one that is collaborative, supportive of a community's needs and still allows for economic viability of a project and the business community around it.

With Vancouver's commitment to historical redress of discrimination against people of South Asian and Chinese descent, the Punjabi Market Collective envisions a future where the Punjabi Market and Chinatown neighborhoods serve as areas for seniors to age with dignity in culturally appropriate housing. This would not be possible without the support of the City of Vancouver and Development Permit Board.

Sincerely,

Punjabi Market Collective