

NEWS RELEASE

October 11, 2011

"Can More Senior Housing in Chinatown Solve Shortage?"

Vancouver, B.C. - A new study from the University of British Columbia has found that over 3300 Chinese Canadian seniors will likely require income-assisted housing over the next fifteen years. Research for the study was sponsored by a grant from the non-profit Chinatown Foundation for Community Revitalization, which was interested in identifying the extent of the need for assisted seniors housing in the City of Vancouver. Co-authored by Prof. Tsur Somerville, Azim Wazeer, and Jake Wetzal, of the UBC Centre for Urban Economics and Real Estate Research at the Sauder School of Business, the study suggests that there are "considerable numbers of ethnic seniors in the City of Vancouver who would benefit from affordable culturally and linguistically appropriate assisted living options." Comparing recent census data for a number of ethnic communities, the authors report that the "need among elderly ethnic immigrants is for housing providing support for Chinese language speakers," and the "number is greater than all other speakers of non-official languages."

Some of the families of the directors of Chinatown Foundation--which include UBC Chancellor Emeritus Bob Lee, SFU Chancellor Emeritus Brandt Louie, and Dr. Wallace Chung--were involved in the building of Chinatown over 100 years ago. Carol Lee, Chair of the Foundation, said "helping to create more seniors housing in Chinatown is a good way to help the Foundation achieve its mission to make Chinatown more vibrant and prosperous while preserving its cultural heritage."

Thomas Tam, CEO of S.U.C.C.E.S.S., responded to the report's findings by observing that the S.U.C.C.E.S.S. Simon K.Y. Lee Senior Care Home in Chinatown, which provides service tailored to Chinese Canadian elders, has a long waiting list. The report "confirms the dire need for more ethnic-appropriate options for senior housing, especially for our most vulnerable Chinese-speaking seniors who require some form of assisted housing services."

Henry Tom, Chair of the Vancouver Chinatown Revitalization Committee, said "the study validates one of the key recommendations of the Chinatown Vision for more Chinese seniors housing in Chinatown." The Chinatown Vision was adopted by Council in 2002 after an extensive

community consultation that was supported by the Vancouver Chinatown Revitalization Committee. Tom adds “continuing VCRC work on the Chinatown Plan and the Vancouver Chinatown Economic Revitalization Plan will call for increased public, private and Family Associations investment in assisted and market seniors housing in Chinatown.”

Prof. Henry Yu, a historian at UBC, states that “housing for seniors in need has traditionally been one of the primary functions for buildings in Chinatown,” but they are “badly in need of renovation and Chinatown associations need help in creating and managing the large number of housing units to meet such a tremendous need.”

A follow-up study at UBC is underway to determine the possibilities for creating enough units in the Chinatown area to meet the coming demand for income-assisted seniors housing. The Chinatown Foundation for Community Revitalization and S.U.C.C.E.S.S. will support the study.

A Press Conference responding to the study’s findings will be held on Tuesday, October 11, 10:30am-12:00pm at:

S.U.C.C.E.S.S. Social Service Centre
Room 314
28 West Pender Street
Vancouver, BC V6B 1R6

For more information about the study, contact Prof. Tsur Somerville or Prof. Henry Yu at UBC. Copies of the study can be found at <http://cuer.sauder.ubc.ca/> For more information about the Chinatown Foundation for Community Revitalization, contact Carol Lee. A documentary about Chinatown history can be found at: <http://chinesecanadian.ubc.ca/video/instrcc-vancouver%E2%80%99s-chinatown-past-present-and-future/>

For information about the Press Conference, please contact:

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