

Dignity House

A Vision for an LGBTT Seniors Affordable Housing and Wellness Centre/Day Program in Vancouver



Draft Discussion Paper

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"Alex Sangha's analysis of the need for a LGBT seniors housing and wellness centre - Dignity House - makes the case for such a facility in Vancouver. By providing some real numbers, a comparison with other cities and a rationale for our particular circumstances, particularly a large aboriginal population, the discussion paper provides a good first step that will hopefully go beyond just discussion."

Gordon Price

Former Vancouver City Councillor

Director of the City Program

Simon Fraser University

Introduction

There are no specific independent affordable housing programs for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and two-spirit (LGBT) elders and seniors in Vancouver. Of the subsidized housing that is available to the community at-large there are long wait lists. Private market housing is not really an option for people on low income. Vancouver has high rental costs and low vacancy rates.

The concept of an LGBT Seniors Housing and Wellness Centre/Day Program, referred to in this paper as Dignity House, is nothing new. Los Angeles, San Francisco, Philadelphia, Chicago, Minneapolis, New York, Denver, Boston, and even Montreal all have or are in the process of studying or developing affordable housing for their LGBT specific populations.

LGBT seniors have unique needs. They have higher rates of depression, substance abuse, and suicide. They are at high risk of social isolation because they often do not have children or family to support them in their old age. Many are left to spend their elder years alone. Some LGBT seniors have even lost much of their social and support circle to HIV/AIDS.

LGBT seniors are an invisible group. The seniors care system often does not provide culturally sensitive services. As a result, many LGBT seniors are forced to go back in the closet for fear of bias, discrimination, or rejection by their caregivers.

It is important to develop a stronger sense of community and connections with other persons from similar backgrounds facing similar life challenges and that is the fundamental concept and vision behind Dignity House.

Facts

- A survey of 416 LGBT seniors in San Diego found that 94% would prefer to retire or age and live among other LGBT community members.¹
- This study found that 47% of LGBT seniors have moderate, serious, or severe difficulty finding opportunities for friendship and connection.
- This study found that 68% of LGBT seniors had neither family nor younger friends that they were certain they could count on for support or assistance as they age.
- Furthermore, this San Diego study found that 79% feel safer living among LGBT community members.
- In addition, many seniors' centres are not LGBT friendly. A study of 24 senior's agencies in New York found that 46% do not welcome gays and lesbians.²

- A survey and focus group of 64 LGBT seniors in Chicago found that over 80% felt it was important to live in an LGBT friendly environment. Specifically, nearly two-thirds expressed interest in living in an affordable rental housing complex that was geared toward mature LGBT individuals and couples.³
- This Chicago study found that 44% were interested in affordable for sale housing, while 40% were not interested mainly because of cost barriers and the amount of time and energy it would take to maintain one's own place. This was seen as very burdensome for many people at this late stage in their life.
- More close to home, 12% of the total Metro Vancouver population over 65 (12,755) were at risk of homelessness. This is largely because these seniors were living in inadequate housing and spending at least half their household income on shelter.⁴
- Nationwide, seniors currently represent about 13% of Canada's population but this is projected to increase to 25% by 2036.⁵ 56 percent of seniors are women and 44 percent are men.⁶

Local Demographics

Table 1 – Estimated Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Two-Spirit Seniors Population in Vancouver, Greater Vancouver, and British Columbia (2011).⁷

	Population of Vancouver	Population of Greater Vancouver	Population of British Columbia
Total Population	603,502	2,313,325	4,573,300
Seniors Population 65 years and over	81,930	312,895	700,500
Percentage Seniors Population	15.32%	13.53%	13.58%
Estimated LGBTT seniors population assuming 5% is LGBTT⁸	4,097	15,645	35,025

Table 1 shows that the target market for Dignity House is anywhere from a minimum of 4,097 LGBTT seniors in Vancouver to a maximum of 35,025 LGBTT seniors in British Columbia if Dignity House is made into a province wide resource.

It may be a good strategic move to develop Dignity House into a province wide resource because then the various health authorities across the province may provide some funding, as well as funding may come from local governments and the province. Aboriginal governments may be a source of funding since many Aboriginal people live in rural and northern parts of BC.

Location

It is advisable for Dignity House to be located in Downtown Vancouver or the West End because this is the heart of the LGBT community of the Lower Mainland. Below are some other important factors that influence whether or not LGBTT seniors would consider a move to Dignity House.

Important Housing Factors⁹

Price
Location
Atmosphere
Management staff
Services offered
Building design

Table 2 – List of Neighbourhood Amenities desired by LGBT seniors in rank order¹⁰

Grocery store	88%
Theaters and shopping	69%
Public transportation	69%
Restaurant and bars and entertainment	65%
Parks and open spaces	65%
Public libraries	58%
Medical centre or hospital	52%
Places of worship	42%
Athletic facilities	27%

Downtown Vancouver and the West End has an abundant supply of all these neighbourhood amenities.

Human Rights Legislation

The BC Human Rights code prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation. This may pose a problem if the developer and/or partners of Dignity House want to develop an exclusive LGBT seniors housing complex and wellness centre/day program. It is advisable to develop a “LGBT friendly” seniors housing complex and wellness centre/day program instead. This means that friends, families, allies, and supporters regardless of sexual orientation would be welcome to take up residence at Dignity House.

It is important to note that Dignity House would still be a homophobia and heterosexist free space. “Homophobia is the fear, hatred, or mistrust of gays and lesbians often expressed in overt displays of discrimination. Heterosexism is the privileging of heterosexuality over all other sexual orientations and identities; although it is often subtle and invisible, heterosexism effectively works to create obstacles to achieving full equality for gays and lesbians.”¹¹

Because of this human rights legislation it is even more critical for Dignity House to be located in Downtown Vancouver or the West End to attract LGBT seniors. Dignity House can be marketed as “LGBT friendly” as indicated previously to draw broader public support, donors, and partnerships with Vancouver’s LBTT friends, families, allies, and supporters.

If the community would like to build an exclusive LBTT seniors complex this may also be permitted in some cases. There is in fact provision within human rights legislation to allow certain facilities to certain populations if those populations can be shown to be historically disadvantaged under what is known as a special program. Nonetheless, restricting residency to only members of the LBTT community could open the project to charges of discrimination within the broader community and context.

Services

Table 3 – List of services desired by LGBT seniors in rank order¹²

Transportation	53%
Social and cultural planning	40%
Exercise classes	38%
Support groups	31%
Food and nutritional services	31%

Preventative health	27%
In-room emergency call button	27%
Financial management	22%
Intergenerational programming	20%
Legal services	20%
Counselling	18%
Nurse in building periodically	18%
Medication management	11%

Building Design Considerations¹³

- Smaller, more intimate and personal spaces
- Wider circulation paths
- Large spans of flooring and fewer transitions
- Handrails to assist in moving through corridors
- Guardrails and chair rails to protect walls and corners from walkers and wheelchairs
- Wider table widths and bases where necessary
- Wider restroom stalls
- Brighter, cleaner lighting
- Dimmable lighting
- Automatic door openers
- Static-free carpeting
- Lower transaction counters
- Easier to reach amenities such as close proximity of the mail room to the front lobby
- Retail space located right off the main lobby
- Sound absorbing materials to alleviate background noise
- Seating groups throughout to allow residents to rest as they move through spaces

Table 4 – List of Important Building Services desired by LGBT seniors in rank order¹⁴

Maintenance	78%
Property management	66%
Front door security	62%

Table 5 – List of Important Building Features desired by LGBT seniors in rank order¹⁵

Storage	77%
Parking	60%
Elevator	49%
Garden	36%
Guest rooms	30%
Community gathering space	28%
Fitness centre	19%

Why Vancouver Needs Dignity House?

SUPPORT AND HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

- Dignity House will provide health and social services and support.
- Dignity House will be an accepting, welcoming, and comfortable place.
- Caregivers can find support with other caregivers living in the facility.
- LGBTTT seniors often face social isolation and rejection from family and society.
- Many LGBTTT seniors do not have the financial, emotional, and family support to take care of themselves in their old age.
- Dignity House will be a one stop shop for senior's services such as bereavement counselling if a partner or lover has died, home care, or help applying for social benefits.
- Dignity House will provide support groups to help LGBTTT seniors feel safe coming out and supporting their life challenges such as living with HIV/AIDS and chronic conditions.
- LGBTTT seniors face similar issues as others such as declining health, dwindling finances, and ageism but they are at higher risk of health and social problems such as depression, substance abuse, and suicide.

- Suicide rates among LGBT seniors are two to three times higher than that of heterosexuals.¹⁶
- There is a gap in the social and health service delivery for LGBTTT seniors. Dignity House aims to fulfill this gap and address the needs of LGBTTT seniors.
- Many LGBTTT seniors do not access health and social services for fear of disclosure of their sexuality. The end result is self neglect and isolation.
- Seniors housing could be a natural setting to provide enhanced services like services found at a seniors centre.
- Dignity House will strive to help LGBTTT seniors find meaning in their lives.
- Dignity House will allow LGBTTT seniors to build and respect the family of their choice to assist with hospital and end of life and medical decision making support.

DISCRIMINATION AND ABUSE ISSUES

- LGBTTT seniors often experience discrimination in seniors groups and home care and residential care systems.
- Many seniors are the victims of financial abuse and elder abuse.
- Safety and hate crimes are an issue. Many LGBTTT seniors have experienced verbal abuse, threats of violence, experienced assault, had objects thrown at them, and were assaulted with a weapon.¹⁷ They feel safer with members of their community.
- LGBTTT seniors are vulnerable in mainstream nursing homes. There is often a failure to protect LGBTTT seniors from elder abuse in these types of institutions.

SOCIALIZATION AND RECREATION

- Dignity House will provide opportunities for recreation and socialization.
- Dignity House will have a day program for residents and members of the community.

- Dignity House will have a wellness centre that provides services such as massage, yoga, and acupuncture, etc.

EDUCATION

- Dignity House will provide educational workshops and learning opportunities.
- Staff at Dignity House will be trained to work specifically with LGBT seniors and elder and minority populations.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

- Dignity House will partner with community organizations and help raise the visibility of LGBT seniors and provide integrated high quality service.
- Dignity House can offer meeting and event space for community organizations in order to establish lasting mutually beneficial relationships and community contacts.

DIVERSITY

- Many seniors' service providers are not trained to provide culturally sensitive services.
- Dignity House will be responsive to diverse LGBTTT senior's needs such as culture, ethnicity, family tradition, community, language, sexual orientation, gender identity, spiritual beliefs, and traditions.
- Dignity House will have a specialized Aboriginal health and wellness program/day program for two-spirited Aboriginal elders such as incorporation of a talking circle, drumming circle, trips to the local sweat lodge, potlatch's, and traditional Aboriginal food on the menu.
- Transgender people often face severe employment, housing, and health discrimination. Transgender people will have a home to call their own at Dignity House.
- The vast majority of LGBTTT seniors can live independently. Some additional space requirements and accommodations will be necessary for people with physical disabilities and other conditions.

- Dignity House will allow pets on some floors.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

- Dignity House will be mixed income and affordable for everyone. Rising costs often force many LGBTT seniors to move out of their neighbourhood or LGBTT community.
- Dignity House could charge a sliding scale rent to residents based on income.

PHILOSOPHY

- Dignity House will provide increased independence and choice in services the residents are offered to maximize their self-determination.
- Dignity House philosophy is that the more supported the residents feel, the less isolated and lonely they will feel. Dignity House is a place to develop friendships and relationships.

Existing Projects

Los Angeles

Gay and Lesbian Elder Housing (Founded 2001)
Triangle Square Hollywood
104 units
Mixed income (sliding scale, tenants pay \$200 to \$800)
Cost: \$21.5 million
Completed

San Francisco

Openhouse (Founded 1998)
110 affordable housing units and 330 units of market rate housing
Mixed income
Projected Cost: \$60 million
In progress

Philadelphia

William Way LGBT Community Centre

52 units

Projected Cost: \$17 million

Initial stages

Chicago

Center on Halsted/Heartland Housing

79 units

Projected Cost: \$22 million

Initial stages

Minneapolis

Spirit on Lake – Rental Program

46 units

Spring 2013 Occupancy

New York

SAGE – Harlem NORC (Naturally Occurring Retirement Community)

Initial stages

Denver

SAGE of the Rockies NORC (Naturally Occurring Retirement Community)

Initial stages

Boston

Stonewall Communities Project

Initial stages

Montreal

Maison Urbaine (Urban Home)

Initial stages

Comparative Cost Estimates

City	Los Angeles	San Francisco	Philadelphia	Chicago
Project	Triangle Square	Openhouse	William Way	Halsted/Heartland
Units	104	440	52	79
Cost	\$21.5 million	\$60 million	\$17 million	\$22 million
Costs Per Unit	\$206,730.00	\$136,363.00	\$326,923.00	\$278,481.00

Funding Model

Capital Costs	Self-Sustaining Plan to Cover Ongoing Costs
Federal Government <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation 	Individual Contributions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> From LGBT Members From LGBT Friends, Allies, and Supporters
Provincial Government <ul style="list-style-type: none"> BC Housing 	Corporate Donations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> From banks and companies that value diversity
Local Government <ul style="list-style-type: none"> City of Vancouver 	Rental Income <ul style="list-style-type: none"> From Tenants largely from CPP, OAS, GIS, or Spouses Allowance
Aboriginal Government <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aboriginal Housing Management Association 	Market Housing Income <ul style="list-style-type: none"> From Tenants Some mixed income market housing will reduce stigma compared to tenants living in exclusively low income affordable housing
Health Authorities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fraser Health Vancouver Coastal Health 	Charitable Foundations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> That value LGBT causes and diversity

Community Sponsorships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Platinum, Gold, Silver, and Bronze Level of Support 	Wills and Estates and Inherited Money <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a Giving Program
In-Kind Donations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Donations of labour, supplies, and materials 	Social Events and Activities Open to the Public <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ticket Sales for Non-Residents Membership Fees for Non-Residents

Specific Vulnerable Populations within the LGBT Seniors Community

Two-Spirited Aboriginal Elders

- Aboriginal elders are more likely to live in poverty.
- The median income for a male Aboriginal senior was \$16,046 and for females \$13,185 between 1996 to 2001.¹⁸
- Aboriginal seniors make up 4.3% of the total Aboriginal population.¹⁹
- The City of Vancouver has 11,730 Aboriginal people in total.²⁰
- In 2001, there were a total of 7,240 Aboriginal elders in BC.²¹
- Aboriginal elders have a shorter life expectancy.
- Status Indian women can expect to live 75.4 years as compared to 82.5 years for non-Status Aboriginal women and 86.4 years for non-Aboriginal women. Status Indian men can expect to live 69.9 years, 77.9 years for non-Status Aboriginal men, and 83.2 years for non-Aboriginal men.²²

Visible Minorities and Older Recent Immigrants

- Between 1991 and 2001 24% of immigrant seniors were low income.²³
- Visible minorities represent 13.4% of BC seniors and 25.9% of Vancouver seniors.²⁴
- More than one quarter of seniors are immigrants to Canada.²⁵
- Chinese make up 60% of Vancouver's visible minority seniors, while South Asians make up 21%, and Filipino make up 5%.²⁶

- Limited English and literacy problems may be a problem with visible minority seniors.²⁷
- Lesbians of colour are less likely to have a partner than white lesbians.²⁸

Persons with Disabilities

- A survey of 416 LGBT seniors in San Diego found that 11% identified as being disabled.²⁹
- Life expectancy is improving among seniors but this means there are more people with chronic health conditions.
- 81% of seniors report at least one chronic condition and one-third of seniors aged 85+ has dementia.³⁰

Unattached Seniors

- More likely to be low income than other seniors.
- 42 percent of senior women and 24 percent of senior men have incomes of less than \$15,000 per year.³¹
- A survey of 416 LGBT seniors in San Diego found that 54% were single, 18% have a significant other, 14% were married, 9% had a domestic partner, and 5% were widowed.³²
- The San Diego study found that 48% of LGBT seniors lived alone, 35% lived with a spouse or partner, and 17% lived with non-related roommates or family.

Transgender Seniors

- Transgender seniors have unique needs and often face severe discrimination in obtaining suitable housing.
- For detailed information please refer to the following report: *Improving the Lives of Transgender Older Adults: Recommendations for Policy and Practice* available at <http://sageusa.org/specialevents/home.cfm?ID=106>

Types of Housing

There are four major types of housing available in British Columbia. 93% of BC's seniors will live out their lives in independent living options such as independent housing, supportive housing, or assisted living. Only 7% will require 24 hour day care services of a licensed care facility known as residential care.³³

Table 6 – Description of the four major types of public housing in British Columbia

Independent Housing	Supportive Housing	Assisted Living	Residential Care
<p>Housing where there usually is no on-site support, in which case services may be delivered to your home.</p> <p>Some subsidized independent housing buildings may include intermittent supports such as meals, social and recreational activities.</p>	<p>Housing with a combination of onsite support services.</p> <p>Services may include housekeeping, emergency response, and meals.</p>	<p>Provides housing, hospitality and personalized assistance services for adults who can live independently, but require regular assistance with daily activities.</p> <p>Services may include help with bathing, grooming, dressing, and mobility. Meals, housekeeping, laundry, social and recreational opportunities.</p>	<p>Residential care is for people who need 24-hour professional nursing care and can no longer be supported in their own homes.</p> <p>Services may include assistance with meals, medication supervision, personal assistance with daily activities, a planned program of social and recreational activities, and respite.</p>
<p>Subsidized rent geared to income or low fixed rent available.</p>	<p>Require referral from your local health authority.</p> <p>Rent portion may qualify for SAFER (see below).</p>	<p>Requires referral through your local health unit. Cost is 70% of after tax income.</p> <p>Private assisted living rates vary from \$1400 to \$6000 per month.</p>	<p>Clients with the highest need and urgency have priority.</p> <p>Requires referral through your local health unit.</p> <p>Private residential</p>

			care may be available and cost between \$3500 to \$6000 per month.
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The Province's SAFER program provides rent subsidies for low income seniors who pay more than 30% of their gross income for rent, but high Vancouver rents make affordability a problem. The maximum eligible rent in Metro Vancouver is \$700/month and the maximum income is \$2330/month or \$28,000 annually.³⁴

Federal Housing Programs

Housing - For Seniors³⁵

- [Home Buyers' Plan](#)
The Home Buyers' Plan allows eligible individuals to withdraw up to \$20,000 tax free from their registered retirement savings plans (RRSPs) to purchase or build a qualifying home. This program may or may not be relevant to Dignity House but is added here for information purposes.
- [GST/HST New Housing Rebate](#)
The GST/HST New Housing Rebate program provides a rebate on part of the GST or the federal part of the HST paid on the construction or purchase of most newly constructed or substantially renovated houses used as a primary place of residence.
- [ecoENERGY Retrofit – Homes](#)
The ecoENERGY Retrofit - Homes program provides non-taxable grants to homeowners and owners of rental properties who have carried out renovations that improve the energy efficiency of their existing home or property.
- [ENERGY STAR Initiative](#)
The ENERGY STAR Initiative provides information on provincial, territorial and private sector incentives and rebates to encourage consumers to purchase energy efficient products identified by the ENERGY STAR symbol.
- [Mortgage Loan Insurance](#)
The Mortgage Loan Insurance program provides insurance on loans granted by

approved lenders for the purchase, construction, renovation, or refinancing of single-family homes or multiple rental housing. The program also grants a 10% refund on its mortgage loan insurance premium when a borrower buys or builds an energy-efficient home or makes energy-saving renovations to an existing home.

Community Consultations and Letters of Support

A copy of this proposal will be sent to the following stakeholders for feedback, discussion, debate, and to request letters of support for the project.

1. Seniors organizations
2. LGBT organizations
3. Aboriginal organizations
4. Local, provincial, and federal governments
5. Interested private sector partners

Possible Lead Agency

Progressive Intercultural Community Services Society (PICS) is a registered non-profit society in good standing with annual reports and other required documents filed and up to date with the BC Registrar of Societies. We are a United Way Agency with PCTIA certification. As a community services society we provide various programs and services including Employment Programs, Settlement Services, Language Services, Social Programs and Housing Services. Our services assist new immigrants, seniors, farm workers and youth. We work diligently to provide responsive programs that address various issues within our community by promoting harmony and intercultural understanding for the purpose of building a more inclusive and mutually respectful society.

PICS HOUSING PROJECTS

[SENIORS HOUSING - GURU NANAK NIWAS](#)

There was a growing need for a seniors housing and care facility within the South Asian community. PICS were chosen by the BC Housing Commission and the South Fraser Health Region to develop these types of facilities adjacent to each other. Our 77 Unit Independent Living Facility and 49 Unit Assisted Living Facility is now occupied with seniors of all ethnic and South Asian cultural backgrounds. In addition to these two buildings, we also operate a Day Program for seniors who want the opportunity to come out of their homes and socialize with others, while allowing for the opportunity to return to their families and homes in the evening.

[WOMEN'S HOUSING - HARMONY HOUSE](#)

Harmony House is an 8-bed supportive cooperative house where battered immigrant women and their children who have been impacted by violence in intimate relationships, and have passed through the initial crisis stage, may stay between 6 to 18 months.

I have met with Charan Gill who is the CEO of PICS and he agreed that PICS will be willing to be the lead agency for Dignity House. PICS has offices and employees in Vancouver, as well as experience developing, funding, and managing affordable housing projects for seniors from scratch. PICS would provide administration support and help with the final funding proposal. A separate committee made up of stakeholders and community members would make most decisions relating to Dignity House that is relevant to the Vancouver and area LGTBTT seniors population.

The committee of stakeholders for Dignity House will have to decide whether or not to select PICS as the lead agency on this proposal.

Draft Process

Feedback – The draft discussion paper has been circulated to key stakeholders and is in the feedback stage.

Needs Assessment - The second stage is to apply for funding to do a needs assessment, feasibility study, and land site study.

The specifics of the project such as location, number of units, and type of housing mix will be clarified in the needs assessment. The needs assessment will cost approximately \$25,000.00.

Committee – The third stage if a need has been established for LGBT elder housing is to establish a committee of stakeholders to make most of the decisions regarding the project.

Consultations - The fourth stage is for the committee to initiate consultations with the broader public and key stakeholders.

Funding Proposal – The fifth stage is for the committee to develop a funding proposal to submit to BC Housing, CMHC, and other private and public funders, as well as apply to various bodies to secure land for the project.

Conclusion

Vancouver is home to an established LGBTTT community. An often neglected part of this community is the LGBTTT elders and senior's population. This is a diverse group of people with two-spirited Aboriginal elders or lesbians of colour, or persons living with disabilities. For far too long, LGBTTT seniors have lived in silence and have been invisible in their own homes. They are surrounded by a predominately heterosexual environment. It is no wonder they suffer from increased health and social problems. The concern from safety alone is enough to cause stress and anxiety for some people.

Many seniors feel pressured to go back in the closet because they fear discrimination, bias, or rejection from their caregivers. Who knows what the emotional and psychological damage that this will have on a person's identity development and sense of inner peace and happiness and well-being.

It is the duty of public policy officials to protect and safeguard the interest of minorities, including gender and sexual minorities. These populations often do not have the social, political, cultural, or economic resources to successfully lobby for progressive social change because they make up a minority of the population. They are always at risk of having their concerns, issues, interests, ideas, needs, and rights overshadowed and overlooked.

This paper is a draft discussion paper to open debate on the development of a seniors housing complex and wellness centre/day program for Vancouver's LGBTTT elderly population. Everyone deserves to live with dignity especially in their old age.

An important benefit of this LGBTTT housing concept is that the seniors care staff will be trained to look at their service delivery through a culturally sensitive lens. For example, are the residents aware of the services available to them? Are the services acceptable, appropriate, affordable, and welcoming?

The goal is to increase the quality of life and health and wellness of the LGBTTT senior's population. It is important to remember that a 65 year old senior today most likely spent his or her whole life fighting for equality, freedom, and fairness for all LGBTTT people and the marginalized. They paved the way for the next generation of LGBTTT leaders. We should not take our elders for granted. It's time to provide them with a home and dignity.

Recommendations

Number	Recommendation	Description
I.	Feedback	That the draft discussion paper be distributed to key stakeholders for feedback.
II.	Needs Assessment	That a needs assessment, feasibility study, and land site study be completed.
III.	Committee	That a committee of key stakeholders be established if a need has been determined. This committee will make most of the decisions regarding the project.
IV.	Consultations	That the committee carry out consultations with the broader public and key stakeholders.
V.	Funding Proposal	That the committee develop a funding proposal to submit to BC Housing, CMHC, Vancouver Foundation, and other key funding bodies both private and public sector.
VI.	Location	That the City of Vancouver coordinate with other levels of government to find a suitable site in Downtown Vancouver or the West End for Dignity

		House, preferably on public owned land.
VII.	Partnerships	That the committee develop partnerships with community organizations and non-profits to get them involved with the project and encourage them to increase inclusiveness of LBTT elders and senior's issues, concerns, and needs in their service delivery.
VIII.	Program Development	That the committee survey the LBTT senior's community and receive feedback from experts about what type of holistic programming residents would like at Dignity House.
IX.	Social Marketing	That the committee utilize social media and internet communications to increase awareness about LBTT senior's issues and Dignity House.
X.	Community Support	That the committee tap into the large LBTT community in Vancouver to build support for the project and create a seniors housing complex and wellness centre/day program that the community can be proud of.
XI.	Training	That Vancouver Coastal Health work with QMUNITY and other relevant organizations to develop culturally sensitive training to work with LBTT seniors.

Dignity House

And in case your wondering why the name Dignity House. It's because words are powerful. They have meaning. What we think can affect our perception and behaviour and attitude. I would like everyone who walks into Dignity House to remember they are to treat the residents with dignity and respect and compassion.

Acknowledgements

*(The following people have been acknowledged for various reasons.
The listing of their name does not necessarily mean they formally endorse the project unless
otherwise indicated)*

Gary Thandi, MSW, RSW
Manager of Family Services
DIVERSEcity
(Gary provided a letter of support for the project)

Ash Brar
Moderator
Sher Vancouver
LGBT South Asians and Friends
(Ash has agreed to provide a letter of support for the project)

Trevor Loke
Commissioner
Vancouver Parks Board
(Trevor agreed to provide a letter of support for the project)

Charan Gill, MA, MSW
CEO
Progressive Intercultural Community Services Society (PICS)
(Charan provided a letter of support for the project and agreed to make PICS the lead
agency for Dignity House)

Wayne Robert
Executive Director
Health Initiative for Men (HIM)
(Wayne provided a letter of support for the project)

Catherine Kohm
Executive Director
Haro Park Centre

(Catherine agreed to provide a letter of support for the project)

Gordon Price
Former Vancouver City Council
Director of the City Program
Simon Fraser University

(Gordon provided an endorsement for Dignity House via a quote which is printed in the inside front cover of this draft discussion paper)



About the Author

This draft discussion paper fulfills partial requirements for my Master of Social Work practicum through Dalhousie University. My first Masters was in Public Administration and Public Policy at the London School of Economics. I completed my BSW through UBC with a First Class Standing. I am currently a Registered Social Worker in B.C. with a counselling practice in North Delta, and previously worked as a social worker with MCFD.

I am a former social affairs columnist with the Surrey Leader, Delta Free Press, and Indo-Canadian Voice. In addition, I am the author of the social discussion book, *The Modern Thinker*, which is available everywhere through Amazon.

I am the Founder of Sher Vancouver which is a social, cultural, and support organization for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) South Asians and their friends, families, and allies. I was the former Co-Chair of Pride UBC during my time on campus.

In 2011, I was voted in a national people's choice award to be one of the winners of the Royal Bank Top 25 Canadian Immigrants Awards.

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