



# **We are too poor to afford anything**

Retail Gentrification Mapping Report  
Carnegie Community Action Project



# Thank you!

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CCAP is a project of the board of the Carnegie Community Centre Association, which has about 5,000 members, most of whom live in the Downtown Eastside (DTES) of Vancouver. CCAP works on housing, income, and land use issues in the DTES so that the area can remain a low income friendly community. CCAP works with DTES residents in speaking out on their own behalf for the changes they would like to see in their neighbourhood.

CCAP acknowledges that our neighbourhood lies on the Unceded Territories of the Coast Salish People: Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh.

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# Introduction

In the winter of 2016, two years after the Downtown Eastside Local Area Plan was approved, the City initiated a Community Economic Development (CED) strategy for the Downtown Eastside. The strategy was initiated in the context of the highest homelessness count ever recorded in the neighbourhood. In 2016, 972 people were counted as homeless in the DTES and with a total population of about 18,000, that means about 1 in 18 people are homeless in the area. Another 3,000 people live in private SRO hotels, often without access to kitchens.

Over 13,000 people are on social assistance in the Downtown Eastside. 5,803 are on disability, 3,068 are on welfare and another 4,000 seniors survive on pensions. Others live on minimum wage or receive no income at all. For many people on social assistance, living on less than \$17 a week after rent is paid, the only way to survive is to rely on illicit and non-market economies. This might entail street vending, panhandling, selling stolen goods, shoplifting, dealing drugs at the street level and or doing sex work. It also means having to rely on free and non-market sources of food, clothes and other necessities.

Historically the City's approach to the illicit economy in the Downtown Eastside has been to criminalize the people involved. But in recent years, with the expansion of harm reduction governance policies, municipal politicians have been conceding that they cannot police-away the illicit survival economies of the poor. The government's interest in controlling and managing the illicit economy has also been increased by the demands of moving along the gentrification of Hastings Street quickly and uninterrupted.

The Community Economic Development plan is the City's most recent attempt to manage and control the illicit economy in the DTES. At its core, the plan is an attempt to repackage unregulated economies, which officials are referring to as "survival work," as a new form of entrepreneurialism. The plan positions survival work and the informal economy as part of what it calls the "self employment livelihoods continuum," placing low-income survival on the same spectrum as "venture entrepreneurship." As part of this approach, the plan supports gated street vending

spaces recently established by the City and measures to regulate the work of binners, street vendors, and sex workers through social enterprises.

Street vendors have different sources for the things they sell, but all are outside the legally regulated economy. Those who scavenge through unsafe and unsanitary garbage bins do so without the protections of the labour code or Worksafe BC. And those who shoplift goods are at serious risk of security guard violence, police arrest, and incarceration. The City's economic development plan only legitimizes street vending at the point of sale, covering up the danger and criminalization of the production of the goods for sale.

Even at the point of sale, the publicly visible part of vending, the DTES economic development plan reinforces the criminalization of those excluded from the limited state-sanctioned spaces or forms of vending. For example, since the designated gated street vending sites opened in the Downtown Eastside, the police have been cracking down harder on people vending on the street.

Instead of challenging the forces of displacement facing the neighbourhood, the criminalization of the low-income community, and austerity cuts to welfare and social services by senior governments, the message of the DTES economic development plan is that there is no alternative. It pretends that the best we can do is to try to extract some benefits from the forces of displacement through social enterprises and other token concessions by business owners.

With the DTES economic development plan the City of Vancouver is failing to address the underlying causes of poverty and it continues to criminalize the ways low-income people try to survive. And when it comes down to it, this plan, like all its previous incarnations, is not about addressing poverty or income inequality. This plan is about controlling poverty and making it palatable to the middle class residents moving into the neighbourhood.

Maria Wallstam, CCAP Coordinator  
Initially published in *The Volcano*





## STEP 1: Community Consultation

To start the project CCAP held a town hall about gentrification and the loss of affordable retail on June 11th, 2016. The meeting was attended by over 60 DTES residents and it was translated into Cantonese and Mandarin.

We discussed what affordable retail we have already lost in the neighbourhood, places where people shop or eat and the reasons why people shop in these places. We also talked about zones of exclusion, places where people do not shop and or eat, and what makes these retail stores exclusive.

### Summary of findings

Non-profit places, big chains stores with low-prices and chinese grocery stores and restaurants were the most popular places to shop and or to eat.

Affordability, proximity, quality, non-judgement and sense of community were some of the top factors people mentioned as important in choosing where to shop and or eat.

New retail stores, cafes and restaurants in the more gentrified parts of the Downtown Eastside were listed as places where people do not shop or eat.

Price, language, prejudice and security were listed as some of the top factors that made retail exclusive to low-income Downtown Eastside residents.

## STEP 2:

# Creating the survey



Soon after the town hall we started two retail mapping committees, one english speaking committee and one cantonese speaking committee. Each committee used the feedback from the town hall to come up with criteria that we could use for our survey and in order to identify different kinds of retail in the Downtown Eastside. The committees produced two surveys, one for english speaking shops and one for Chinatown.

In the survey, we considered prices, if there was any low-income people present in the store, or if we knew that this was a place that low-income people came to. We also considered if it was a place that in our opinion contributed to gentrification. In Chinatown, language was also an important consideration.

Some of the questions that the survey asked:

- Can you afford the average product in the shop?

- Do you feel judged and or stigmatized?
- Were there were other low-income people in the shop? Is this a place low-income people visit?
- Does the shop sell things that serve the basic needs of low-income residents and low-income chinese seniors?
- Was there signage in chinese or did staff speak cantonese or mandarin in the shops in Chinatown?

Once we had finished the survey, we started doing the survey of retail in the Downtown Eastside and Chinatown. All the surveying was done by low-income Downtown Eastside residents and over 20 different low-income Downtown Eastside residents, half of whom were chinese seniors helped out with the surveys throughout July and August.

We surveyed the Downtown Eastside Oppenheimer District, Chinatown and the Hastings corridor from Campbell Avenue to Cambie. Over 450 shops were surveyed throughout this period.





## Where welfare money goes

**Look for Work (\$25):** To look for work and contact the welfare office you need a phone, so \$25 is included below. There are no funds for transportation.

**Hygiene (\$10):** The approximate amount you need for keeping yourself and your clothes clean.

**Room Deposit (\$20):** You have to pay a damage deposit; usually  $\frac{1}{2}$  of a month's rent. Welfare takes this off your cheque at \$20 a month until the deposit is paid, usually in 11 or 12 months. In theory, when you leave the tenancy you should get the deposit back, but many times the landlord keeps the deposit.

**Rent (\$479):** The amount provided for rent is \$375, but it is almost impossible to find anywhere for this rate. Even in the DTES most single rooms costs \$479 a month\*.

## “We are too poor to afford anything”

The initial goal of the project was to identify retail that caters to the low-income community. However, we quickly realized while doing the survey that even the businesses that are more affordable and welcoming to low-income people do not really meet the needs of people on social assistance. The answer to the question “Do you afford anything in this shop?” was 9 out of 10 times: “no, only on cheque day.”

The BC government provides \$610 a month in welfare to a single person, without a recognized disability, who is expected to look for work. It has been at this level since April 2007. Once rent and other essentials are paid for, a person on welfare has \$76 left to spend on food for a whole month. This means that a person on welfare has only \$18 (at most) to spend on food each week.

This means that even if a shop is relatively affordable (and also welcoming to low-income residents), a person on welfare can hardly afford to buy anything at market rates. Instead, people on welfare and disability have to rely on non-market or free sources for food, such as food line-ups, Union Gospel Mission, the Evelyn Sellar and the Carnegie.

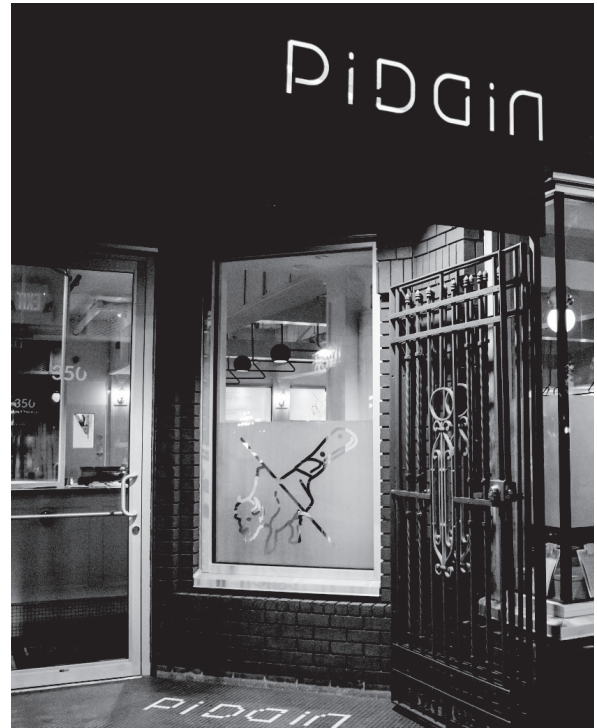
While more affordable and inclusive retail does not truly meet the needs of low-income residents, they do not either contribute to gentrification and the loss of low-income housing in the neighbourhood. However, as the neighbourhood changes, it is likely that these businesses will also start to increasingly cater to higher income residents. This is why we decided to restrict the category of low-income serving services and businesses to non-profits with a social mandate.

# What kind of business?

## Gentrifying Retail and Zones of Exclusion

Gentrifying retail is retail that caters to and seeks to attract higher income residents or visitors. These retail spaces makes the neighbourhood more attractive to middle class people and incentivises further investment.

Zones of exclusion are spaces where people are unable to enter because they lack the necessary economic means for participation. Zones of exclusion are also sites marked by increased surveillance and policing. Only those with status, privilege and wealth can enter; all others are carefully watched, interrogated, and criminalized.



## Non-Gentrifying Retail

The majority of the retail in the Downtown Eastside is what we call non-gentrifying retail. Most of these businesses have been in the community for a long time and low-income community members regularly shop at these places when they have money. These shops don't have a gentrifying impact on the neighbourhood but it is possible that as the neighbourhood changes, these businesses will start catering to higher income residents.



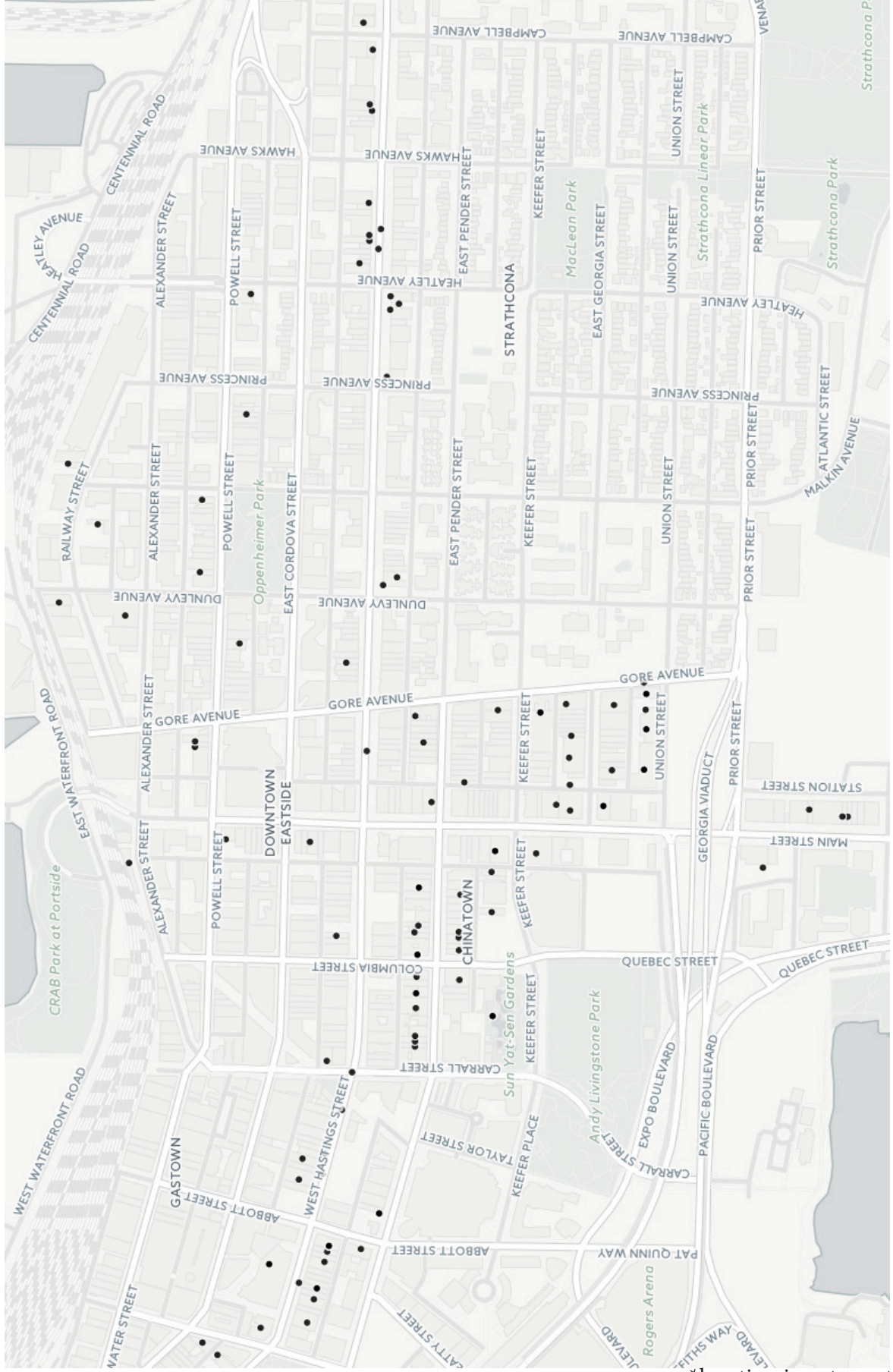
## Non-market "retail" with a social mandate

These retail spaces are mostly non-profit run with a social mandate to cater to the low-income community. Their prices are significantly below the market prices in the area and they make an effort to make low-income people feel welcome.





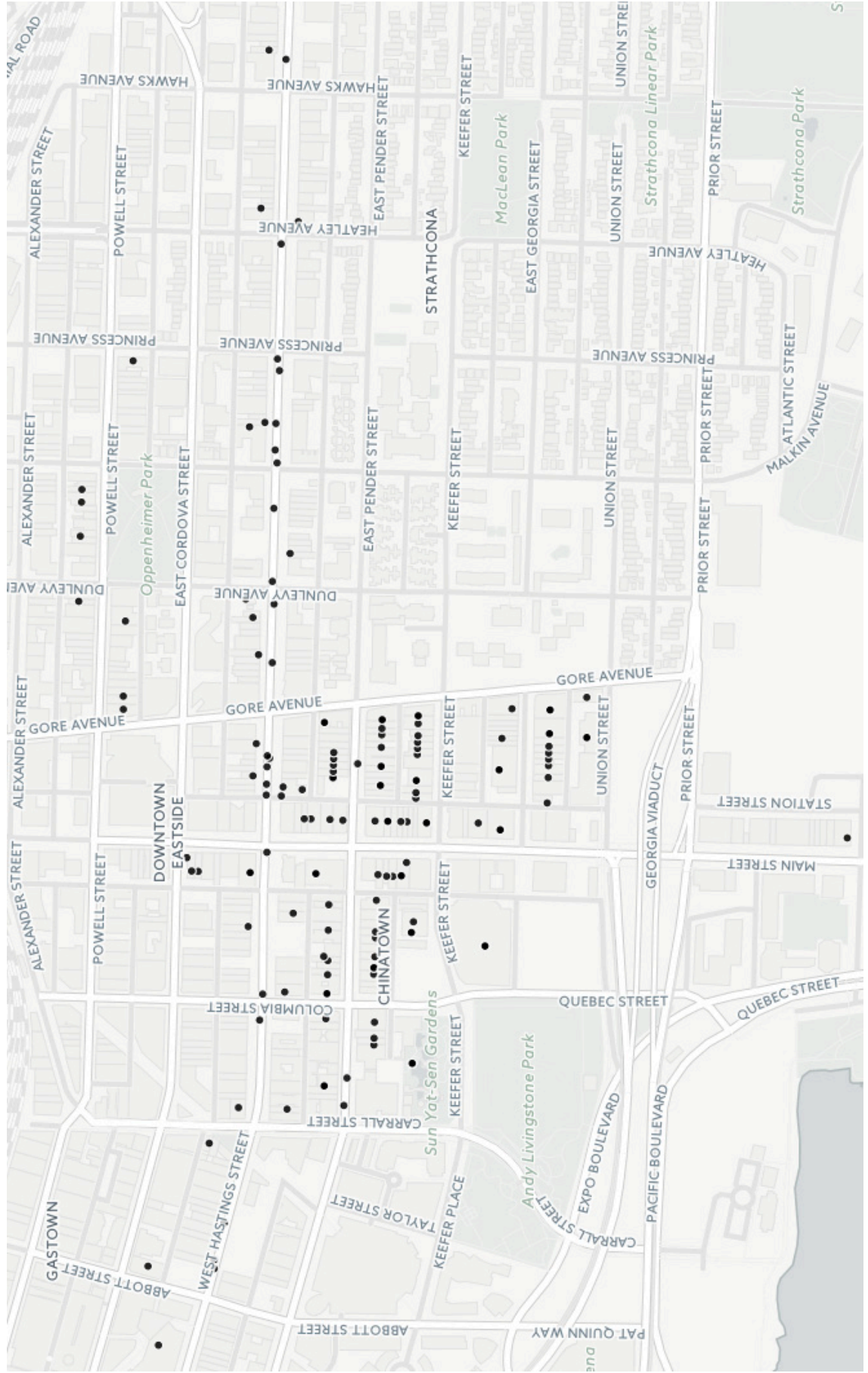
# Gentrifying retail and zones of exclusion in the DTES (2016)



\*location is not exact



# Non-gentrifying retail in the DTES (2016)



\*location is not exact

## Places we lost

Top King BBQ Meats  
 Lee Loy BBQ meats  
 BC Royal Cafe  
 Keefer Bakery  
 Golden Wheat Bakery  
 The Ferry Market  
 Fu Wah Chinese Restaurant  
 New Food King Produce  
 Red Star Vegetable Fruit Co  
 Ng Fung Enterprises  
 Pender Seafoods  
 Phen Phen Filipino  
 Hong Chong Fresh Fish Market  
 Mylite Soya Foods / Superior Tofu  
 Man Cheong  
 Save on Meats and Cafe  
 Little Spot Restaurant  
 Park Cafe  
 Uncle Joe's Burgers  
 The Only Seafood Cafe  
 United We Can Bottle Depot  
 Bike Works (United We Can)  
 Flowers Cafe  
 Blue Eagle Cafe  
 Uncle Henry's  
 Sunrise pub  
 American pub  
 Peter's Buy & Sell  
 Wing's Cafe  
 Spartacus Books  
 Pacific Pub

## Summary of findings

Type of Business	Number
Zones of exclusion / Gentrifying retail	156
Non-Gentrifying Retail	201
Non-market retail	6
Vacant store fronts	84

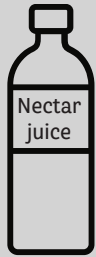
## New Shops

Below is a list of the 20 newest shops that opened in the DTES. All of these shops opened within a year of when the survey was done (summer 2016) and every single one is a gentrifying shop / zone of exclusion (ZoE).

Name	Address	Type
Roost	789 GORE AV	ZoE
Juke Fried Chicken	182 KEEFER ST	ZoE
Virtuous Pie	583 MAIN ST	ZoE
Hunter & Hare	227 UNION ST	ZoE
Drink Fuel Refuge	130 W HASTINGS ST	ZoE
Posh Lash	104 W HASTINGS ST	ZoE
Dish and Du/ER	118 W HASTINGS ST	ZoE
Kissa Tanto	263 E PENDER ST	ZoE
Half Fool	18 E PENDER ST	ZoE
The Dub	138 E PENDER ST	ZoE
Fluffy Kittens	611 GORE AV	ZoE
The Tuck Shoppe	237 UNION ST	ZoE
Fat Mao Noodles	217 E GEORGIA ST	ZoE
Selectors Records	8 E PENDER ST	ZoE
Sai Woo	158 E PENDER ST	ZoE
Giant Ant	683 GORE AV	ZoE
Black Medicine Tattoo	441 GORE AV	ZoE
Juniper Restaurant	185 KEEFER ST	ZoE
Starbucks	587 MAIN ST	ZoE
The Mackenzie Room	415 POWELL ST	ZoE



# Sample of prices on a gentrified block of West Hastings Street



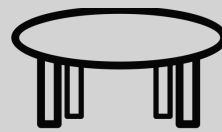
\$11 for a 16oz juice bottle at Nectar Juice, 102 W Hastings.



\$138 for real mink eye lashes at Posh Lash Beautique, 104 W Hastings



\$5 for a coffee at Drink Fuel Refuge, 140 W Hastings.



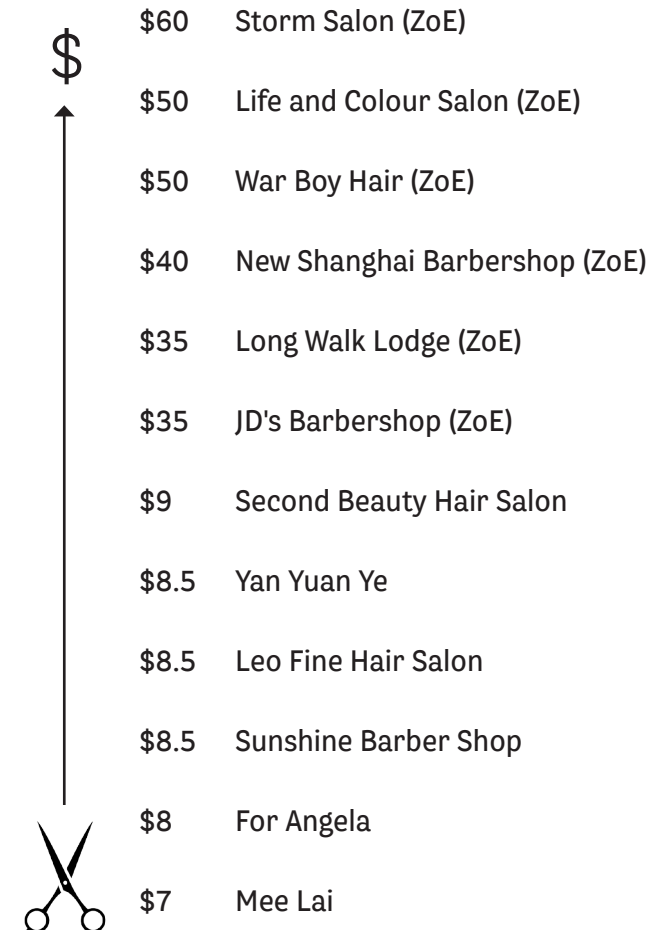
At Scanteak Furniture, 126 W Hastings, prices start at \$3,000.

## Worst Zone of Exclusion



At a townhall in September, the audience voted on the worst zones of exclusion in the Downtown Eastside. With the price for a dinner menu starting at \$50, Pidgin Restaurant at 350 Carrall St was the undisputed winner.

## Hairdresser Gentrification Index





# Gentrification creates zones of exclusion

Gentrification not only forces people out of the neighborhood through increasing land value and higher rents, it also produces a kind of internal displacement for low-income residents by creating zones of exclusion.

Zones of exclusion are spaces where people are unable to enter because they lack the necessary economic means for participation. As wealthier people move into the neighborhood, more spaces are devoted to offering amenities that cater to them. Grocery stores, banks, coffee shops, restaurants, salons, various retail stores, night clubs, stylish pubs, etc. begin to appear throughout the neighborhood, and are priced beyond what people on fixed income can afford. These sites become zones of exclusion.

Zones of exclusion also become sites marked by increased surveillance and policing. Strategies of control and punishment are implemented at these sites in order to protect them from the presence of unwanted people and from potential disruption. Only those with status, privilege and wealth can enter; all others are watched, interrogated, and criminalized.

There is another sense in which such places are zones of exclusion. Whenever land is used to build condos or develop businesses for wealthier people, it is removed or excluded from use by the community; it no longer becomes a place where a local community-based vision can be implemented. In this sense, gentrification excludes possibilities.

We counted 156 gentrifying retail shops and zones of exclusions in the area we surveyed, many of which have only opened in the last 1-3 years.

\* Street art in Chinatown by unknown artist



# Chinatown not coffeetown

Article by 鄺太 Mrs. Kong about the  
gentrification of Chinatown



從左至右 From left: 鄺太 (Mrs. Kong), 劉太 (Mrs. Luu), and 陳三嬌 (Ms Chen)  
infront of Dalina, a new gentrifying business in the heart of Chinatown.

There are a lot of tall towers coming into the neighbourhood, like 105 Keefer. We can't afford the rents in these new buildings, even if we were to use all of our income towards rent. These towers also bring a lot of disrespectful rich white people into our neighbourhood. And because of these changes, small businesses in Chinatown are closing and moving: Money BBQ, Hung Win Seafood Ltd, Chinatown Supermarket and Lee Loy BBQ Meats are some of the places we've lost recently.

It's heartbreaking to see all these stores closing in Chinatown because a lot of them have been in the neighbourhood for a long time and a lot of people like me have personal relationships with the storekeepers and the workers. You used to be able to get everything in this community. There was a place that took passport photos. It was really important for a lot of immigrants because their status changes a lot so they always need pictures taken.

We had all the grocery stores and herbal stores, cafes, a variety of restaurants to eat dim sum or

dinner, which are important social spaces for us Chinese people. Some of the doctors have moved away too and there are not even a lot of grocery shops left.

A big problem is that the new places opening in Chinatown are either a coffee shop or a nightclub. These places are really expensive and they don't sell things that we need, nor are they welcoming spaces for us. They are unsuitable to our needs. I never go into these places and I drink my coffee at the Carnegie. No one needs expensive coffee or skateboards, but we need groceries.

Chinatown right now doesn't have a seniors building. No matter where you're from, seniors need a lot of support and many are very isolated. There is no place for us to hang out. I just want a place where I can sit down with my friends and eat. This is also why we need more affordable Chinese restaurants and cafes. They are important social spaces for us.

# Recommendations

## **Address the root causes of poverty and homelessness**

How are low-income downtown eastside residents supposed to benefit from a community economic development plan if they don't have basic access to housing and if they don't have enough money to buy food? An inclusive community economic development plan needs to put housing and social assistance rates front and centre, and propose aggressive measures to stop gentrification, implement rent control, to advocate for more social housing and to raise the rates. A shared social justice calendar is not enough!

## **Implement measures to stop new zones of exclusion.**

The city seeks to reduce vacant storefront by 50%, but vacant storefronts are better than zones of exclusions! Zones of exclusion pushes up rents, increases land values and contribute to the overall gentrification of our neighbourhood. The City needs to take immediate measures to stop more zones of exclusion coming into our neighbourhood. The city could do this by applying a surcharge on gentrifying businesses or by establishing a social impact assessment process directed by low-income residents to approve or deny new business applications.

## **Reverse the loss of shops that cater to low-income residents**

Gentrification and uncontrolled investment is pushing up land values, rents and taxes in the neighbourhood, displacing low-income residents from their homes and forcing the closure of small shops. Tax exemptions for individual businesses does not address the underlying reason for why small businesses are being priced out of the neighbourhood. The city needs to push for commercial and residential rent control, and use zoning laws to hinder speculation, increasing land values and new condo developments in our neighbourhood.

Until these measures are implemented, we support tax exemptions as a short term measure to stop the closure of businesses that caters to the low-income chinese community. However, tax exemptions to gentrifying businesses like London Drugs should immediately be revoked and tax exemptions should only ever be used as a short-term measure.

## **Stop the criminalization of poverty and all survival work**

Street vending is critical to the local economy and provides a crucial source of income for low-income people. The goods are also affordable to low-income people. The Community Economic Development Strategy calls for the legitimization and destigmatization of street vending, but not the decriminalization of it. This means vending would still be criminalized in unsanctioned spaces. CCAP recommends that the City takes immediate measures to decriminalize all survival work, not only street vending but also binning, panhandling and sex work, and immediately exempt it from ticketing, harassment and arrest.





### **Expand and support non-market food services in the Downtown Eastside**

The City needs to extend supports to non-profits that provide quality goods and food for free or below market prices. As long as welfare and disability rates are insufficient to survive on, we need more places like Carnegie that provide nutritious and affordable food to low-income Downtown Eastside residents. Because the current lack of these services, low-income residents have to wait in food line ups for hours every day. We welcome tax exemptions to non-profit services and community groups that support and cater to low-income residents. Measures to expand food sources in the Downtown Eastside must be accompanied by measures to raise the rates and to renovate SRO Hotels so everyone has access to their own kitchen. We want justice, not charity!

### **Ensure jobs for low-income residents**

Create job training programs for anyone who wants them. Adopt hiring policies for low-income residents with barriers, including languages, for jobs in city-owned, city-supported and city-operated services. We don't want jobs associated to the new St. Paul's hospital, new condo projects or gentrifying businesses: jobs that contribute to the destruction and displacement of our community. And we are sick of being paid less than other workers in the neighbourhood, often below minimum wage. We want to be paid a decent wage like everyone else! Measures to expand job and training opportunities have to be accompanied by measures to increase the earning exemptions for people on social assistance.

### **We are not tax takers! Take measures to destigmatize unemployment!**

The Strategy focuses a lot on providing and expanding income generating opportunities, but the fact is that over 12,000 people are on disability and on pension in the Downtown Eastside. Thousands others are on welfare, many of whom should receive disability benefits but do not. The City needs to recognize that a lot of people can't work and that survival means a lot of unpaid work. The City needs to make immediate measures to destigmatize unemployment in the Downtown Eastside and recognize the dignity of people who don't have a formal job.

# 建議

1. 從根源上解決貧困和無家可歸的人  
如果他們沒有基本的住房，如果他們沒有足夠的錢買食物，這些低收入的市中心東區居民如何從一個社會的經濟發展計劃中獲益？一個包容的社會經濟發展計劃，需要把住房和社會救助水平的前沿和中心，並提出了積極的措施來阻止中產階級化，實行房租管制，倡導更多的社會住房和提高援助。共享的社會公正日程是不夠的！

2. 阻止更多新的窮人排斥區的措施。  
城市要減少50%的空置的店面，但空置的店面比窮人排斥區！窮人排斥區推高租金、土地的價值，助長整體社區的中產階級化。這個城市需要立即採取措施阻止更多的排斥區進入我們的社區。城市可以通過施加在中產化的企業的一個附加費或建立對新的業務申請，由低收入居民主導的社會影響評估過程。

3. 利用分區不是免稅，扭轉迎合低收入居民的店鋪的流失  
高檔化和不受控制的商鋪投資推高了附近

的地價、租金和稅收，逼使低收入居民離開家園，迫使小商店關閉。個別企業的免稅並沒有從根源解決為什麼小企業被趕出鄰里。這個城市需要推動商業和住宅的租金控制，使用分區法律阻礙投機，而提高土地及附近的新公寓的價值。  
在這些措施實施之前，我們支持免稅作為一項短期措施，以阻止那些迎合低收入中國社群的企業倒閉。然而，對London Drugs這中產化企業的免稅應立即撤銷和減免稅只能作為短期措施。

4. 阻止把貧人與生存工作罪惡化  
街頭販賣是當地經濟的關鍵，為低收入的人的一個重要的收入來源。賣的商品也是低收入人群負擔得起的。CED戰略要求的是讓街頭販賣合法化。街頭販賣仍然是犯罪，占用未經批准的空間。CCAP建議立即採取措施，所有城市生存工作合法化，不僅街頭販賣，也包含在在廢物箱檢東西的、乞討和性工作，並立即免除告票、騷擾和逮捕。



## 5. 擴大和支持在市中心東端的非市場食品服務

市府需要擴展支持的非盈利組織去提供低於市場價格或免費的優質的商品和食品。只要福利和傷殘援助金不足以生存，我們需要更多像卡耐基這樣的地方提供營養和負擔得起的食品給市中心東區低收入居民。由於目前缺乏這些服務，低收入居民必須每天在派食物隊伍等候了幾個小時。我們歡迎向支持低收入居民的非盈利服務和社區團體免稅。擴大在市中心東端的食物來源措施伴同提高社福津貼和改造SRO酒店讓所有人都可以有自己的廚房。我們需要的是正義，不是施舍！

## 6 確保低收入居民的工作

創造就業培訓計劃給想要的人。采取雇用低收入居民的就業政策，包括語言障礙，在市府所有的工作，市府支持和市府經營的服務。我們不需要與聖保羅醫院、我們的社區新公寓項目或造成的破壞和逼遷的企業本身有關的新工作。我們厭倦了他們

給的工資低於其他工人，往往低於最低工資。我們要像其他人一樣得到體面的工資！擴大就業和培訓機會的措施，必須採取措施，增加社會救助人員的收入豁免。

## 7. 我們不是稅收接受者！採取措施使失業不是羞恥或丟臉的問題！

戰略的重點是提供和擴大收入的機會，但事實是，在市中心東端超過12000的人依賴殘疾和養老金。更有成千上萬的人領福利金，其中許多人應該得到殘疾津貼，但沒有。市府需要認識到很多人不能工作，那就意味着要有大量的無償工作。城市需要立即採取措施解決在市中心東端的羞恥或丟臉失業問題和認識人人有正式工作的尊嚴。





**UNCED COAST SALISH TERRITORIES**