

# Free Store Design Group Meeting

Hornby Denman Community Health Care building  
January 16, 2013

**Present:** Jan Kennedy (Chair), Ilze Raudzins, Kathi Sauve, John Howard, Barbara Baird, Jon Isfeld (CVRD Waste Management), Stani Veselinovic (Depot Manager), Judith Walmsley, Ruth Fortune, John Machell, Phil Bailey, Lynn Nunley, Judith Lawrence, Phyllis Victory, Janet LeBlancq, Reina LeBaron, (Recording Secretary)

Call to order: 2:00pm

Jan gave an introduction and distributed package of background information including maps from last year's Design Group meetings. Some of the Depot staff and volunteers held a meeting in 2009. The notes, with suggestions for the new Free Store, have been found and will be included in the design process.

The Depot is tax funded, managed by HIRRA, located on a Crown Land lease (held by CVRD) and the buildings are owned by the CVRD.

The plan is to hold three Design Group meetings to hear from as wide a range of experiences as possible: the first will look at everyone's experiences and values around the Free Store; the second will be about overall placement of a new Free Store building on the site; the third will focus on the actual design of the building based on values and site location.

At 2:15pm, the meeting broke up into four smaller groups, each one including at least one Depot staff or volunteer, to address several questions.

## 1. What works well physically about the current Free Store especially in terms of layout and flow?

**Physical structure:** open airiness, high ceilings, sky lights, natural light,

**Volunteers and drop off area:** helpful volunteer and staff, volunteers near to entrance to answer questions, volunteers' sorting area near to office, drop off area right inside door, sorting bin,

**Ambience:** messy but organized ambience, rustic down-home feeling, keeping stuff out of land-fills,

**Layout:** layout with different sections, clean dry storage, "boutique" clothing area, kids' area contained (no back door),

## 2. What engages your heart about our Free Store?

**Stuff:** FREE stuff, treasure hunting, finding strange things, can find almost anything, anyone who needs something can probably find it, synchronicity of finding just what you need, finding things for other people, opportunity to share and be generous, can bring *any* reusable item, chance for things to find a new life, re-using so much stuff,

**24/7 Access:** everyone welcome 24/7 365 days a year, open all the time,

**Ambience:** unique funky quality that harmonizes with the environment, unusual signs, lots of wood and natural quality, the mobile that hangs from the ceiling, important to keep pieces of the past remembered,

**Social aspects:** very democratic, free-flowing socializing, connects people, spirit of helpfulness and cooperation, spirit of participation that crosses demographics, aids interactions between people, filling a social need, brings a quality of concern to our lives,

showing what can be done, “I want *everyone* to come to the Free Store”, “If it weren’t for the Free Store, I couldn’t live here.”

### 3. What needs improving about the Free Store?

**Space:** more space (especially for the books and games areas), more room for storage, more welcoming doors: bigger and easy to open, larger entrance, larger aisles, better wheelchair accessibility, covered outdoor area large enough for furniture, sorting area needs improvement,

**Cleanliness:** easier to keep clean, better organization and cleanliness,

**Volunteers:** More volunteers, better working conditions for volunteers (stools?), easier way to get garbage from Free Store to Recycling and dumpster, easier way to move cull material out of Free Store,

**Heat:** winter heat improvement, make it heatable and improve lighting,

**Education:** more education regarding what is garbage (bearing in mind that many people don’t read signs), less garbage dropped off in front of the Free Store,

**Construction:** meet building codes, keep natural materials but upgrade to better quality wood,

### 4. What changes would you suggest?

**Space:** more space and circulation area, all one level, no stairs, have a “Purgatory space” for things about to be sent to the land-fill, a shelf for “Do you know what this is?”, have metal pots and kitchen stuff in the same area as ceramics and glasses, designated visiting areas in an area other than the drop off and sorting area, 2,500 sq ft instead of 1,700 sq ft.

**Sorting area:** two-sided sorting area, volunteers on one side of a drop-off bin or high-edged table with visitors on the other side and easy access to the hanging clothes area, more rolling clothes racks, improve culling process, an option of having delivering drop-offs via a chute,

**Electronics:** unsorted electronics kept locked up in off-hours, provide labeling for broken equipment to make it easier to decide whether to re-use or recycle, a way to sort appliances into “working” and “non-working—parts,”

**Education:** keep signage simple, develop a “how to use the Free Store” brochure, some way of easily identifying staff and volunteers, a people-counting device to see how many people come to the Free Store in off-hours,

**Construction:** shipping containers as part of the new building would accommodate shelving and be solid, fireproof and reduce construction costs, salvage materials from the old building with volunteer help, lots of natural light, heat to keep the space dry and warm enough for stuff and for people

At 2:50pm the small groups returned to the big group and reported answers to the four questions.

The next meeting will be on Wednesday, January 30 at 2:00pm at the Community Hall.

Adjourned: 3:35pm.

Reina's (Minute taker) synopsis: \*\*

\*Working well:\*

1. Sorting area,
2. volunteers,
3. natural light,
4. rustic ambience,
5. free stuff,
6. 24/7 access,
7. socializing

\*Needs improvement:\*

1. more over-all space (including doors and aisles),
2. two-sided sorting bin,
3. better culling process and access to garbage area,
4. more public education,
5. more heat,
6. better labeling of electronics,
7. meet building codes
8. keep building affordable by reusing materials (shipping containers)