

THE SOLITAIRE HOTEL | A LETTER TO OUR COMMUNITY

Before the Alexander Residence

As we begin our part in this building's story, we want to start with the land beneath it. Long before there was a Gastown or an Alexander Residence, this was Indigenous land, and it still is. We are opening our doors on the unceded homelands of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations, who have cared for these lands and waters for countless generations. Their relationship with this place is ongoing, and colonization and dispossession are unfortunately a part of the history we need to recognize. For us, caring about this neighbourhood means remembering that its story reaches much further back than the buildings we see today, and that these Nations are part of its present and future. It is their stewardship and generations of care that allow us as uninvited guests to live and operate in such beauty.

We are still in the early stages of developing our systems and finding our feet. Once we are settled, we hope to give back to this community. We want to make room for that contribution thoughtfully as the hotel becomes established.

The building's history

We understand why a building that once provided affordable housing becoming a hotel brings up questions and concerns. We care about this neighbourhood and want to share the history of 58 Alexander Street openly, including what happened to its residents, so people can form their own views.

Built in 1911-1912 and designed by William F. Gardiner, the Alexander Residence began as a modest hotel, with residential accommodation above ground-floor shops.

Its years as affordable housing

The building was converted to affordable housing and community services in 1973. The City acquired it in 1976 through the Vancouver Public Housing Corporation. In its September 2025 report, the City evaluated options for continued affordable housing, identifying extensive maintenance needs. City staff concluded that converting the building into self-contained homes would significantly reduce the number of homes and result in financially unsustainable operating costs.

What happened to the residents?

According to the City, all residents chose to move through mutual agreements ending their tenancies and were rehoused into larger self-contained affordable housing, including Roddan Lodge and the New Continental. City staff helped with packing and moving. Separately, the City allocated 30 replacement affordable homes at 177 West Pender Street, then scheduled for completion in October 2025.

The City's decision

On September 17, 2025, City Council voted to approve removal of the building's Single Room Accommodation (SRA) designation as part of the City's plan to sell the property. That removal took effect on October 7, 2025, and the building was subsequently sold. We want to note that Vancouver prohibits converting SRA-designated rooms to tourist accommodation without an approved conversion permit. Here, the City had already rehoused residents and removed the designation before the building was sold.

The Next Chapter for 58 Alexander

The new owner considered a student-housing model after the sale but did not follow through with the plans. After this, we took on the space to create The Solitaire, a 29-room micro hotel. We hope to offer a warm, comfortable and characterful place to stay at a more approachable price in an expensive city, with rates starting at \$110/night.

We know there will be mixed feelings about this change, regardless of how the building reached its current chapter. We appreciate and share the concern for affordable housing in an expensive city. We also share concern about caring for our most in need and vulnerable populations. Had it still been operating as affordable housing when we were introduced to it, we would not have taken on a project to convert it into a hotel. We believe its compact rooms are well suited to short stays, and hope The Solitaire contributes positively to the Gastown and Vancouver tourism communities. The building's years serving important purposes deserve respect. We welcome questions and hope sharing this history helps people decide for themselves how they feel about its next chapter.

Thank you for reading.