



FLEET

July 2021 Feasibility Report

Exploring moveable temporary
artist studios in Vancouver

An **Other Sights** production

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Executive summary

In 2020, [Other Sights for Artists' Projects Association \(Other Sights\)](#), a Vancouver-based artist collective was successful in securing funding for a feasibility study for FLEET—a project exploring temporary, mobile and non-habitable working art studios to be located on vacant or under-used land in the City of Vancouver. The intention of FLEET was to provide a fresh artistic approach to the demand for affordable and accessible cultural production space in Vancouver.

Before the project could get underway, COVID-19 hit and the landscape for planning creative projects dramatically shifted. After a pause, FLEET got underway in 2021 with the hiring of two consultants to complete two streams of research—one for consulting with the arts and culture community (cultural engagement); and the other for understanding the opportunities and limitations for siting the studios (land use).

The FLEET project is intended to be a nimble, flexible and creative response to the need for artist studios in Vancouver. As the Eastside Arts Society (formerly Eastside Culture Crawl Society) documented in its report [A City Without Art?](#), more than 400,000 ft² of artist studios was lost to redevelopment over the course of 10 years. And while [the City has made a commitment to 800,000 ft² of new or revitalized arts and culture space](#), since 2019 there has been a steady decline in studio space, with many more facing precarious and uncertain futures.

Equally, industrial land in Vancouver is under considerable pressure. Many existing sites that house artist spaces are facing the threat of redevelopment, and the City's new *light* industrial zoning (i.e. digital technologies) is displacing some of the older, messier and less lucrative industrial uses such as art studios. In this landscape, the importance of protecting and creating art studios is amplified.

FLEET is one of a number of projects that is looking at how to open up potential in the City and unlock the use of spaces for creative and economically vulnerable populations. At present, the Vancouver Mural Festival is examining how to use vacant commercial spaces as working studios—many spaces which became vacant over the course of the pandemic.

Due to the dramatic changes caused by COVID, the City is also exploring how to provide a more agile response to better serve its economic needs. For example, its City Council passed a City-wide by-law to permit outdoor patios on public lands (primarily street rights of way) through an [expedited permitting process](#). The pandemic has demonstrated the ability of local governments are able to create adaptive and responsive solutions to urgent situations.

The findings and recommendations from FLEET suggest a way forward for the mobile art studios in Vancouver. Research through cultural engagement found:

- A strong demand for art studios of varying sizes (50 to 500 ft²)
- Key interior features
- A call for a diverse tenure model (rental or residency) to accommodate a wealth of art disciplines, and
- A preference for placement of units near community hubs, washroom access and transit (for safety), and in close proximity to each other to promote community and capacity building among future users.

There is also potential interest among cultural organizations to partner with FLEET in varying capacities (see survey findings on pages 24–27 and Appendix D); however, this is greatly reliant on FLEET determining its financial viability, and its ability to secure a site and develop a sustainable implementation plan and operational model.

The research on siting the studios equally showed a strong positive response from the stakeholders who were consulted. Most were interested in exploring the opportunity with the FLEET team, with one local developer also stating it was willing to support the project through a rezoning. But most recognized that getting the required permits can be expensive and slow. (The City does not have a streamlined, supportive process for the creation of cultural production spaces as it has for temporary outdoor patios.)

Overall, the FLEET feasibility study notes the demand and interest in art studios, as well as the challenges around creating them. Research recommends some potential sites to locate an artist studio as well as some amenities that should be available on site. The opportunities vary from developing an artist studio in partnership with a larger organization to creating an artist studio that can be easily moveable. **As part of next steps, findings recommend the project team identify (and secure) one to three potential sites, the best typology for the studios (cost-benefit analysis), potential partnerships and a viable operational model** (see Conclusion on page 28 for more details).

While the original intent of this phase of research was to look at the feasibility of FLEET as a project, in the end, consideration was also given to the land use process around artist spaces. As such, the study's recommendations include not only that the FLEET team seek to work with the City to pilot one to three projects—some more rapid-response and some which might be longer term and attempt to address systemic policy—but also includes a number of recommendations for the City with respect to aligning the permitting process in order to support the preservation and creation of artist production space.

Overview of project

The City of Vancouver has the highest density of artists per capita in Canada; however, over the last 10 years, it has lost more than 400,000 ft² of studio space.¹ In 2019, the City released its *Making Space for Arts and Culture Vancouver cultural infrastructure plan report*. It found that cultural spaces are among the most vulnerable (and artists the most vulnerable to space loss) as a result of increased land values and displacement of arts and cultural activities. As such, its City Council committed “to optimize City policies, tools, programs and investment priorities to secure, enhance, and develop vibrant, affordable, and accessible arts and cultural spaces.”²

In 2020, *Other Sights* secured a cultural infrastructure grant from the City of Vancouver to **explore the feasibility of creating affordable, non-habitable small structures that serve as moveable artist work-studio/production spaces placed temporarily on under-used or vacant sites.**

This project is called **FLEET** —a creative approach to complement the community’s ongoing efforts to build more studio opportunities for artists.

¹ Eastside Culture Crawl Society (now Eastside Arts Society), *A City Without Art? No Net Loss, Plus!* report, 2019.

² City of Vancouver, *Making Space for Arts and Culture* report, 2019.

Formed in 2005, **Other Sights** is a non-profit organization and is dedicated to challenging perceptions and encouraging discourse around shared social spaces. As such, it seeks to create a presence for art in spaces and sites that are accessible to a broad public. The collective is guiding the feasibility/planning and design stages of the FLEET project. othersights.ca

Based on preliminary project scoping, the following four assumptive goals were outlined:

1

Function

To provide functional and moveable units for creative production and curation, thus bringing awareness and responding to the critical lack of affordable and accessible studio space in the City

2

Form

To design beautiful and captivating artist studios that are themselves considered pieces of art, as a means to draw passersby into the project

3

Showcase

To move the artist away from the out-of-sight studio into a more visible and public area, hence engaging Vancouverites and visitors into the City’s creative spaces, while shining a spotlight on the work of artists

4

Partnership

To bring community stakeholders and other non-profits into the making of this project through engagement, collaboration, sponsorship/rental of units and gifting or access to available, unused, under-used or transitional land, private or otherwise

The objectives of FLEET reflect goals and actions two through six as summarized in the City of Vancouver’s *Making Space for Arts and Culture* report: to prioritize cultural heritage, equity, and accessibility; to remove regulatory barriers; to expand tools to prevent displacement and secure spaces; to expand community partnerships; and to increase community ownership. In this light, FLEET is not only a multi-stakeholder, collaborative and innovative project, it also strategically aligns with City priorities and the needs of the artists who work and live here.

UNIT SIZES + TYPOLOGIES

To illustrate FLEET small structures to stakeholders, the FLEET team visually proposed units 50 to 500 square feet using forms that varied in degrees of moveability and customization. These typologies were:

1

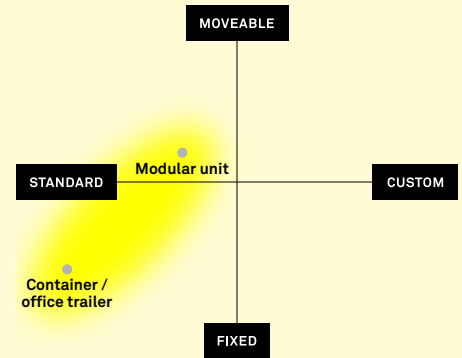
Pre-fabricated: Modular units, retrofitted shipping containers



Powers Construction's [retrofitted shipping container](#), Vancouver



Honomobo's [Mobo](#) mobile spaces, Edmonton



2

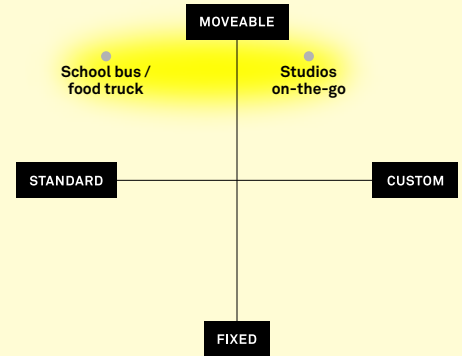
On-wheels: Self-propelled trucks, moveable studios



Leah Weinstein's [SiteFactory](#) converted school bus, Vancouver



Germaine Koh's [Lululiving](#) moveable studio, Vancouver



3

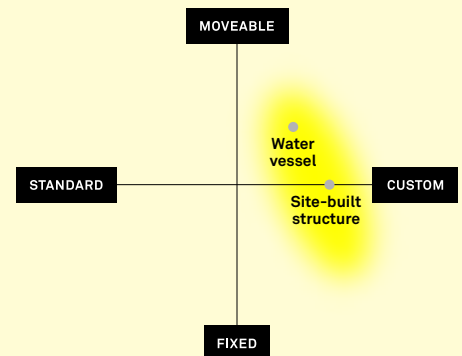
Custom-built: Wood-framed units



Holly Ward's [The Pavilion](#) at Langara College, Vancouver



[The Blue Cabin](#) floating artist residency, Vancouver



PROJECT PHASES

In its grant application, the FLEET team proposed a three-phase project:



The first phase included the FLEET feasibility study. Two separate research streams were conducted by two researchers:

- **Land use** Where could a FLEET studio feasibly be located?
- **Cultural engagement** What were the needs and wants of a future FLEET user?

Research streams were done independent of one another, coming together towards the end of the project to determine where there was overlap, and how FLEET might move forward as a unified whole. For this reason, the report has been separated into two sections, outlining each stream’s individual methodology, findings and recommendations.

Note: A scope expansion to review unit costing and partnership development was proposed during the course of this research; however, this remains under consideration.

Note: Both FLEET project researchers attended the April 27, 2021 presentation of *Un-Leased: Temporary Artist Spaces Research Project*—the [Vancouver Mural Festival](#)’s investigation into the opportunity of temporary artist spaces in vacant commercial storefronts. The summary findings from the project indicated great support for the artist studios themselves, as well commercial real estate landowners who were willing to participate with *Un-Leased*. The main obstacle was securing permitting through the City.

Research streams

Land use

METHODOLOGY

1. Clarified the permitting process in Vancouver

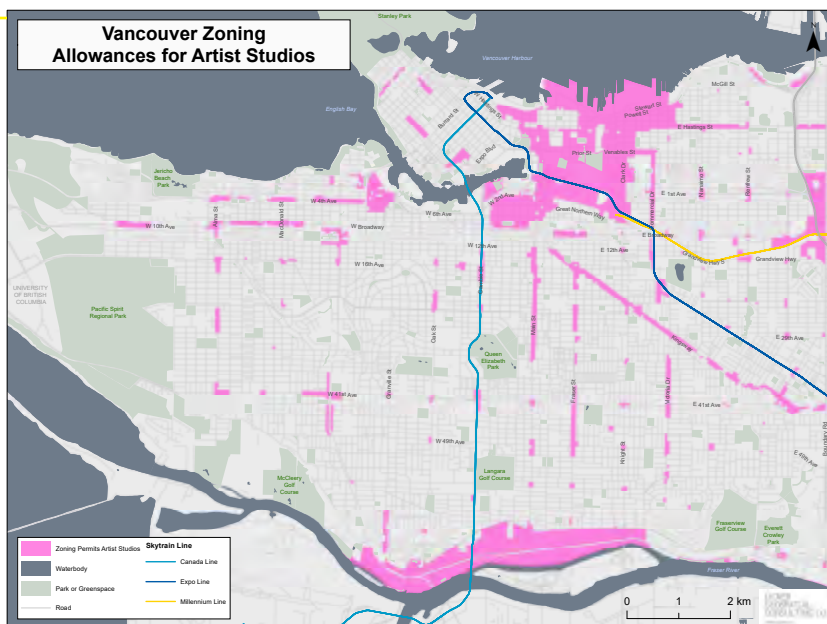
The City of Vancouver, unlike most other municipalities in BC, does not have a temporary use permit (TUP) system. A TUP allows, on a short term basis, a use at an existing site that otherwise would not be permitted according to the existing zoning. In this way, a TUP can allow for a lot of flexibility in the interim. For example, an artist studio could get a TUP for a commercially zoned site that does not currently permit artist studios. However, in Vancouver this is not available for artist studios or any other use.

Unless a TUP system could be developed, there would be two potential permitting routes:

- (1) locate at a site with the required zoning and meet building code requirements or,
- (2) create an artist studio that could be licensed as a vehicle.

2. Identified sites with zoning for artist studios

Based on the City of Vancouver's *Zoning and Development By-law*, a map was created showing where artist studios are permitted—either outright or with approval by the Director of Planning. It is feasible to locate a studio in these zones although a built form artist studio (not a vehicle) would need to meet building code requirements which would be determined through the permitting process. This is not necessary if the studio is located on-site and on-wheels as it would then be treated by the City as a vehicle.



This map does not include [Comprehensive Development District](#) or CD-1 zones which the City uses as a type of rezoning or *spot zoning*. Most CD-1 zones are unique and might allow a temporary artist studio on a site by site basis (e.g. Langara College).

See Appendix A for more on Class A and B Artist Studios in Vancouver.

3. Explored opportunities to partner with the City of Vancouver

- Consultations were conducted with staff in the following departments:**
- [Film and Special Events \(FASE\)](#)
 - Parking
 - Real Estate and Facilities Management
 - Street Activities ([public space and street use](#))
 - [Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation \(Parks Board\)](#)

All but FASE suggested there could be a possibility to partner with them, especially since the feasibility study had been funded by Arts and Cultural Services. Partnership with City departments would require organizational alignment and a partnership structure (see Appendix A).

4. Explored opportunities to partner with other organizations

- Other organizations contacted included:**
- Langara College and Emily Carr University of Art + Design
 - TransLink
 - [Vancouver School Board \(School District #39\)](#)

Findings were similar to that of partnering with the City in that organizations would need to ensure the project's goals align with the organization's, and the process could require a commitment of time.

5. Contacted land developers about potential partnerships

The developers showed interest, with one developer in particular willing to manage a rezoning of a property to allow the siting of an artist studio.

6. Consulted with existing studio operator

An artist studio has been located at an existing site that has the required zoning, thus aligning with the City's Zoning By-law. It also meets the City's building code requirements to the extent that a development permit with a time limit was issued (two years, with the option of renewal). The project could be replicated but it was onerous and expensive, and did not lend itself to be mobile or easily duplicated.

FINDINGS

- The most nimble and flexible approach to the creation of an artist studio is one that is on-wheels
- We received positive response from those we consulted with but they wanted more information about how the FLEET project is planning to proceed (i.e. shape of studio, programming of space)

Best siting opportunities:

- Work with the landowner or tenant of a property, and locate a FLEET studio on a privately held site
- Work with a larger organization to site a FLEET studio

In more depth

Without a TUP system, any artist studio built as a structure will need to conform to the City's Zoning By-law and secure a development permit. Thus, the form the FLEET studio takes becomes as important as the location.

There is some flexibility on the part of the City to allow relaxations as per the [Zoning By-law Section 5](#):

The authority of the Director of Planning or the Development Permit Board to relax any provision of this By-law pursuant to this section 5.1 includes the authority to impose conditions, including but not limited to time limitations.

However, the relaxations and time limitations are not specified in the By-law and are determined only at the time of application. Possible relaxations could include the waiving the need for a washroom if there is access to one nearby, and allowances for more temporary footings.

Given that framework, the most nimble and flexible approach is an artist studio that is on wheels. The other options—building a structure on privately owned land or working with a larger organization—have fairly unpredictable timelines.

Research findings indicated two potential approaches:

1. Work with the landowner or tenant of a property and locate a FLEET studio on a privately held site

This process would most likely require fewer expectations around the programming of the artist studio than option two.

- Opportunities include:**
- A site zoned for an artist studio where an existing arts organization currently operates
 - A site currently zoned for an artist studio with other uses on site, or a site which is vacant; this approach would require dialogue with the land holder and/or tenant
 - A site not currently zoned for an artist studio but has a land holder who is interested in an artist studio on site; ideally, the site would have a CD-1 zoning which tends to be more flexible

2. Work with a larger organization to site a FLEET studio

This approach generally requires setting up a process for developing the artist's role concurrently with siting the studio.

- Opportunities include:**
- Work with Parking at the City to locate an under-used Easy Park parking lot with the goal to activate the space
 - Work with Arts, Culture and Decolonization at the Park Board to explore alignment of FLEET with [decolonization principles](#); opportunities exist for placement adjacent to a community centre, but decolonization is an important consideration in siting
 - Work with staff at Langara College to set up an artist studio that would meet its requirements

While we have identified a number of possible locations and partnerships for locating FLEET studios, the easiest way to set up an artist studio is if it is on-wheels—and therefore, deemed to be a vehicle. The Cultural Services department is seeking to find new opportunities for artist spaces by funding research studies such as this one; however, the process of siting and developing new artist spaces is cumbersome, lengthy and expensive. The inability to provide a less onerous approach to creating new artist spaces is a significant obstacle for innovative, exciting and much needed cultural production space.

As an alternative model, in 2020 [the City enacted a by-law for the use of public space for temporary outdoor patios](#) in order to support the food service industry during the pandemic. This example shows that it is possible to enact a City-wide by-law to allow temporary, short-term use in order to support an economic sector. Currently, there is no parallel for arts and cultural production, other than for special events (festivals).

See Appendix B for the by-law regarding temporary outdoor patios.

RECOMMENDATIONS

While the typology of the FLEET studio project will ultimately be determined by the location and partnership agreement of whichever site(s) is/are selected, it is recommended that at least one of the pilot studios be on-wheels—preferably on a trailer to allow for more flexibility in design—and can meet the City’s vehicle requirements, such as insurance. This will provide the fastest, most nimble response.

Immediate (one to six months)

- Locations** That further work be done as to where a FLEET studio might be sited, what form the studio(s) would take, and any permitting requirements (if permitting is required). The sites identified with most potential from the feasibility study are:
- Private land zoned for an art studio
 - Private land not zoned for an art studio but with a landowner willing to undergo a rezoning
 - Sites with a public entity that is interested in partnering with the FLEET project such as City of Vancouver’s Parking or the Vancouver Park Board’s Arts, Culture and Decolonization team
- Stewardship** That the City actively engage in the protection and development of accessible and affordable artist studios.

Short-term (six to 12 months)

- Streamline** That the City consider developing a flexible and adaptive approach to locating artist studios throughout Vancouver. This approach can be modeled on the adoption of the by-law for temporary outdoor patios (2020).

Medium-term (one to two years)

- Zoning** That City-wide zoning is reviewed and revised to be more inclusive of artist studios, whether temporary or permanent, and artist live-work spaces throughout Vancouver, with consideration of commercial and CD-1 zones. This work could be incorporated as part of the ongoing work of the City Plan.

Cultural engagement

METHODOLOGY

Outreach around cultural engagement was conducted between May and June 2021, and included phone and in-person interviews with key stakeholders in the cultural realm, primarily in Vancouver, and across a variety of art disciplines: public art, music, visual arts, performing arts (theatre), media arts, experimental arts, interdisciplinary arts, and art by Indigenous and persons of colour. Each interview was 30 to 60 minutes long.

An online survey was also produced and shared with cultural engagement interviewees, Other Sight’s working group and its networks, various listservs, and through the Eastside Arts Society artist membership. The survey was tailored to each respondent based on the recorded response to the questionnaire’s initial question—for example: who you are, an artist/performer.

Both the interviews and survey captured feedback on the FLEET project from the lens of artists and those working in the art world in varying capacities. Questions were framed around their needs and insights as they pertained to FLEET’s proposed typologies, studio size and internal features, tenure and placement options, and components of an artist residency program—should FLEET wish to include that as part of its pilot project and model.



See pages 24–27 and Appendix D for more detailed survey findings.

Based on the 22 interviews, at a high-level, this is what we learned and heard about the present art landscape and thoughts on the FLEET project more generally:

Current trends + art studio user needs

Accessibility	24-7 access, no hour restrictions; dual production and presentation space
Build capacity	Partnership and art centre mergers, tools for success (training for artists)
Choice	Tenure, placement (mixed preference, public vs. private/community-centric areas)
Ease of use	Entry/exit, booking space
Insecurity	Unaffordable workspaces, shortage of studio spaces
Safety	Access to space; stored work, tools and materials

FLEET opportunities + unknowns

Opportunities:

- Access to production spaces to create art (workspace and office)
- Connect public with artists' work
- Exhibition and selling potential
- Expansion and interconnection of creative communities
- Income stability
- Secured tenure and safe working conditions
- Support for emerging and established artists

Unknowns:

- Artist selection process, access and equity
- Business modelling and governance
- Financial viability and cost to construct, transport and operate studios
- Final unit location(s) and site features
- Insurance, liability and occupancy parameters should the studios act as both presentation and production spaces
- FLEET management and studio maintenance

FINDINGS

- There is no one-size-fits-all FLEET studio
- Preference towards container units, mobile studios (on-wheels) and wood-framed units
- Build various sizes to accommodate various art disciplines and their needs for space
- Focus on interior features over exterior, but brand unit exteriors to make FLEET units easily identifiable
- Offer diverse length of stays
- Place close to community versus public hotspots
- Make community outreach optional, and expand artist-in-residence components to include mentorship and peer-to-peer engagement

See Appendix C for pros and cons associated with each proposed FLEET typology.

In more depth

Art form + use

Based on the diversity of art disciplines, and their unique needs, **there is no one-size-fits-all FLEET working studio**. FLEET units can serve phases of production but not all of them for all art forms. For example:

FLEET studio for:	Can support:		Cannot support:
Ceramics	✓ Sketching	✓ Prototyping	⊗ Firing / Kiln work
Music	✓ Songwriting	✓ Rehearsal space	⊗ Recording studio

Typologies

Each proposed FLEET typology comes with its pros and cons. From an ease of construction and moveability perspective (and without expensive transportation, mooring or additional driver training required), **retrofitted container units, mobile studios (tiny houses on-wheels) and site-built (wood-framed) units show the most promise and potential for this project.**

“Very few have the experience to do it all on their own.”

—INTERVIEWEE ON DRIVING AND MAINTAINING A SELF-PROPELLED TRUCK/RETROFITTED BUS

Unit size

Often, artists share studio spaces with others, however, this has been less desirable since COVID. The recurring advice was **to construct units of varying sizes**—50 to 500 square feet—as some art forms require less space (writing) than others (visual arts). Unit sizes should reflect the purpose behind the space and how its future users will function in it. Larger spaces should be **designed with flexibility and multi-purpose** in mind—so studios can function as an office, creative and rehearsal space, and exhibition area—all in one.

“It’s typical to share studio space but it’s not ideal.”

—INTERVIEWEE ON PREFERENCE FOR SOLO PRODUCTION SPACE

Design

Exterior: One of FLEET’s initial goals was to create a working studio space that was equally art from the outside. However, time and time again, stakeholders shared that a striking exterior will draw crowds but is disruptive to those occupying the space. Instead, emphasis on the interior space was recommended, and to consider animating the exterior walls with projected visuals, and branding the unit with colours or styles that make FLEET studios easily recognizable to the community it serves.

“I don’t want to work in a fish bowl.”

—INTERVIEWEE ON STUDIO DRAWING TOO MUCH PUBLIC ATTENTION

Interior: Unit size and function aside, conversation after conversations, these **studio features** were highlighted as must-haves:

- Adjustable and natural lights
- Climate control
- Computer equipment for self-promotion: computer monitor, microphone, projector and screen
- Fenced area
- Garage door
- Heat
- Heavy duty outlets
- Internet
- Power
- Security and alarm
- Small fridge
- Soundproofing
- Storage
- Utility sink
- Ventilation
- Wall and floor space
- Washroom (or close access to one)
- Water access
- Working table and chair (preferably on casters and a table that can be adjustable in height)

The survey produced the same results. See page 25 for more details.

Tenure

Each art discipline has its own set of needs as it comes to space, work process, tools and outputs. These will all greatly influence how long a practitioner will need to use a studio space. Interviewees suggested offering units with **diverse tenure agreements**—be it in two-week and monthly intervals, and up to one or two year long-term rentals or artist residents. Two-week periods between longer stays are highly recommended as a way to give future FLEET program administrators ample time to maintain and set up the space for the next artist.

Placement

One of FLEET's initial goals was to place units in visible areas of the city as a means of showing the artist's work. Interviews, though, showed a greater **preference for units located around residential or industrial areas, that are well connected to community centres and hubs**. There was also some discussion around FLEET studios being placed close or outside [Fieldhouse art residency studios](#) (located in Vancouver parks) and existing art centres and gallery spaces without current studio space or access.

“Artists will do whatever necessary to get space but that doesn't always mean it will be natural to them.”

—INTERVIEWEE ON FORCING PUBLIC OUTREACH ON ARTISTS SEEKING WORKING SPACES

Art residency

Working artists who have participated in an artist residency were asked to speak on the often mandatory community engagement piece attached to residency programs and to share their thoughts should FLEET choose to include one in its model. This is what was shared on this topic and artist residencies as a whole:

- Community outreach is not a part of every artist's practice, and can take practitioners away from their work, unless it's a natural extension of it
- Tailor any artist residency to the needs of the artist, and opt for choice and optional over mandatory number of events or hours per month or term; artists shouldn't be penalized should they not opt for it in their application form
- Preference for peer-to-peer mentorship and engagement with fellow artists over public engagement
- Many artists aren't trained in engaging with the public, hence training in public engagement, self-marketing, building community and working with the City would be beneficial
- Reporting is tedious and time-consuming, and takes artists away from their work
- Residencies aren't working studios, so shorter periods can work (see findings on Tenure)

RECOMMENDATIONS

While there is great appetite among working artists and cultural assets to see more artist studios in the City of Vancouver, the FLEET model, from an operational, financial and partnership perspective, still requires more analysis. Without an in-depth exploration into the costing of studios based on form—presumptively best suited as a retrofitted container unit, mobile studio (on-wheels) or wood-framed unit, not to mention a viable tenure model—stakeholders cannot fully understand the future potential of FLEET and whether it should go to pilot. In many ways, FLEET is viewed as a bandage solution to a more looming crisis of under-funded arts and culture centres and collectives, and disappearing affordable, secure and accessible studio space. Moreover, additional investigation into potential partnership is equally advised, as this will highlight operational modelling and who could administer such a program.

A strong urging is to explore these parameters—costing and partnerships—prior to any implementation. At a high-level, and should the FLEET project be deemed financially viable to itself or as a means of revenue generation for existing cultural assets, these actions or activities are highly recommended on an ongoing and medium-term basis (through to piloting) to support FLEET and the arts more generally:

Ongoing

Recommendations for City governance of culture

While FLEET can provide some art production space, it is not the answer to the overall problem of the significant loss of space over the last decade plus. Therefore, it is important that the problem be addressed on a more comprehensive basis.

Streamline Propose new staff or liaison role between cultural services and planning departments at the City of Vancouver, to help fully realize City-funded projects approved through cultural infrastructure grant programs. Barriers and the inability to navigate City planning, zoning and permitting often puts funded projects at risk of being shelved.

Intervention Greater government involvement in securing long-term below market rents for artist-run centres, collectives, festivals and exhibition spaces, as a means of countering the widening gap between rising (but under-funded) operational budgets and unaffordable rents.

Operational funding Increase and expand continual core and operational funding for artist-run centres, festivals and exhibition spaces, beyond seeding new projects. Without sustainable operational funding, creative assets are at risk of closure.

Medium-term (one to two years)

FLEET

Partnership **Existing cultural assets.** Explore whether partnerships can be formed with existing digital art collectives without any physical office space, and/or artist-run centres without access to their own studio space (for artist residencies), to use FLEET spaces (on a selected site or adjacent to artist-run centres) as a means of revenue generation to offset funding gaps. This would require further investigation around capacity, how many studios to build to offset resource taxing, FLEET management and maintenance models, and overall fiscal responsibility.

Design **Consult with artists.** Include artists of varying disciplines, ages, experience (emerging and established) and physical abilities in the design of FLEET studios—to ensure these spaces are suited for all abilities and fully functional, able to take a mess (no white walls), can cater to a wide array of art forms and serve beyond “works of art.”

Build with all users in mind. At a minimum, incorporate wide doorways, ramps, accessible outlets and countertops into each design, so as not to exclude any artist from their use.

Make FLEET sustainable. Incorporate an environmental component into the design of each FLEET studio. Add green roofs to units to regulate temperature, and partner with salvage and deconstruction crews to provide free or low-cost reclaimed construction and design materials where possible for studio interiors and exteriors.

Soundproof. Consider soundproofing all units, especially larger ones, to ensure practitioners can use FLEET studios at all hours of the day.

Choice + ease **Placement.** Down the line, place future FLEET studios in both public and highly visible locations, and more private ones, so artists can choose which location best serves them.

Optional. Should FLEET move forward with an artist-in-residency program as part of its pilot, make community outreach, mentorship, peer-to-peer artist engagement and any final exhibition show optional components without penalty for preference to the applicant in the application and selection process. FLEET studios should be in service of working artists and not organizational mandates.

Extra. Consult with artists on what extra offerings they would like as part of a residency program, be it training in self-marketing, City engagement and the like.

Easy. Make the selection process transparent, the application form short and sweet, and the program without complicated reporting requirements, so as to not take artists away from doing their craft.

General

Reconciliation. Build reconciliation and land acknowledgement into the narrative of each FLEET studio, so that its future users better understand the history of the area and land on which they are working.

Use. Consider building units of varying sizes to accommodate a diversity of art forms, single users and shared studio space, including a unit specific for presentation use and another soundproofed for music creation (music space is outlined as a priority within the City of Vancouver's *Making Space for Arts and Culture* report).

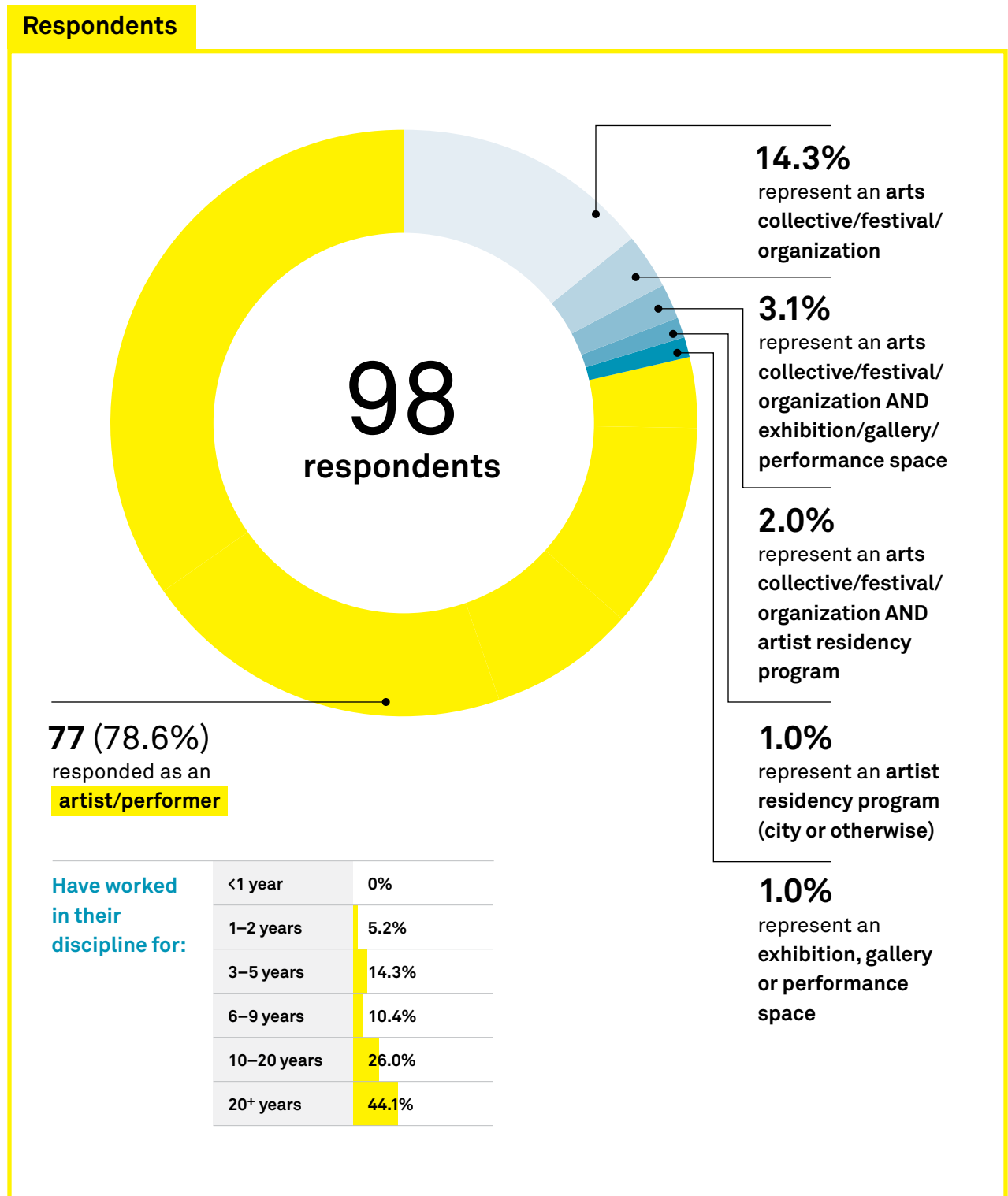
Layout. As part of the pilot, build FLEET studios in clusters rather than scattered units across the city, as a means to increase visibility, safety and to build community and capacity among the users.



Campos Studio, Volumes project

SURVEY FINDINGS

The survey was open over a 16-day period (May 31 to June 15). Ninety-eight responses were captured. This is who responded and what was shared:



Unit size + features

Respondents need their studio space to be a minimum of:

50–100 ft ²	15.6%
100–200 ft ²	37.7%
200–300 ft ²	24.7%
300–400 ft ²	7.8%
400–500 ft ²	10.4%
500+ ft ²	3.9%

Respondents consider these features as essential:

Water access	67.9%
Internet/wifi access	67.5%
Toilet	65.4%
Floor space	64.9%
Table + chair	64.6%
Wall space	64.1%
Storage + shelves	51.2%

SURVEY RESPONDENTS:

“Gone are the days of hole-in-the wall art spaces! People want accessible studios and galleries, which includes access to toilet facilities.”

Respondents consider these features as nice to have:

High ceilings (10+ ft)	69.2%
Microwave + fridge	64.6%
Security/alarm	63.8%
Space greater than 500 ft ²	63.3%
Speakers/sound system	61.5%
Adjustable lighting	61.5%
Universal design	56.4%
Soundproofing	56.4%
Wheelchair accessibility	51.2%
Natural light	50.6%

“Sound isolation is my top priority. Ideally, I would be able to use the unit to make sound at night.”

Tenure

Respondents say the following length of time works best for them and their art discipline when it comes to the use of a studio space (rental or residency):

Weekly basis or less	1.3%
2–4 weeks	6.6%
1–3 months	32.5%
3–6 months	28.6%
6–12 months	32.5%
1 year	31.2%
2 years	20.8%
Other: 2+ years; monthly; ongoing	15.6%

Placement

Respondents would want FLEET art studios to be placed in the City in these areas:

Commercial areas (ex. Downtown shopping district)	36.4%
Close to community amenities	74.0%
Close to nature/parks	61.0%
Close to transit	66.2%
Industrial areas	44.2%
In high-traffic areas (ex. Along Main Street)	37.7%
In pedestrian-only or friendly zones (ex. Along walking paths)	45.5%
In touristic areas (ex. Granville Island)	39.0%
On streets (if unit is moveable/on wheels)	29.9%
On waterways (if unit is a water vessel/float home)	42.9%
As laneway units in the backyard of a single-family home	41.6%
Other: Mobile/portable; combination of the above options; rural/farm; in neighbourhoods (west side, east side); area with free parking; land reclaimed from former gas station sites; the more the merrier	45.5%

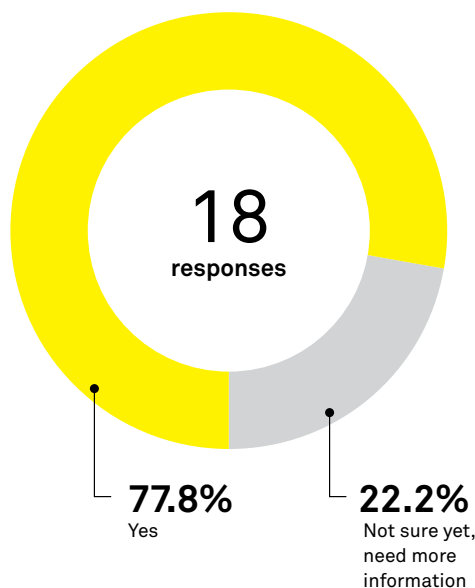
Artist residency + shared feedback

“I’ve done residencies and run artist residencies. I’ve noticed and found that residencies less than two weeks are usually not that supportive, as it takes people time to arrive, settle in, disconnect from their regular routines, then pack up. Four weeks to six months is ideal.”

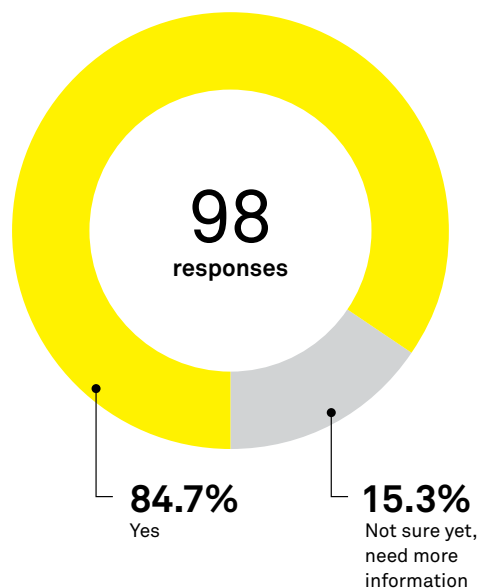
“I think variety in length of residency is great for artists. A mix of lengths of stay would accommodate more individuals in terms of their other commitments. A variety of places/neighbourhoods would also suit a wider variety of practitioners.”

“It was great to have an art show at the end to promote work that was created during the residency.”

Potentially, would you be interested in incorporating one of the FLEET artist studios into your own artist-run centre/exhibition space or residency program?



Based on what FLEET inspires to achieve, would you support the design, construction, placement and use of small structures as temporary art studios in the City of Vancouver?



See Appendix D for more on survey respondent profiles and findings.

Conclusion

The FLEET project aspires to plan, design and pilot a *fleet* of moveable studios for working artists; to deploy them on a short-term basis in the City of Vancouver, and manage their ongoing use. In fact, FLEET is meant to be a fast but limited response to the loss of arts and culture production space in the City. This study is the first step toward determining the feasibility of such an initiative.

Research findings show that there is support for the concept while artist-run centres and collectives prudently share their struggles to operate as both landlords, renters and creators in a city heavily impacted by rising costs and rents. As such, FLEET is an interesting, albeit temporary, means to address the needs of the creative community in the face of these challenges.

With this in mind, FLEET's future is less defined by its potential than its viability. It is recommended that more detailed work be done before moving forward to a pilot phase. This would include securing a site(s), costing out typologies, and exploring potential partnerships and operating models, among other things. **In this light, this study proposes the following concurrent next steps:**

- Confirm the capacity of the FLEET project team
- Explore potential partnerships, either with a larger organization, a private landowner/tenant and/or existing cultural asset(s)
- Secure a site(s)
- Cost out form options and determine the artist studio form(s) for the site
- If required, submit a preliminary proposal to the City to better understand permitting requirements
- Establish funding routes
- Build a framework for a pilot(s) that addresses the FLEET operational model

These actions will not only ensure FLEET is feasible from an operations standpoint, but sustainable and of benefit to the art community over the long-term.

CONTACT

For more on **FLEET**, visit www.othersights.ca/fleet-moveable-artist-studios or contact Germaine Koh, Other Sights working committee member, at mail@germainekoh.com or 778-317-9745.

Other Sights



Richard Horden's *Micro Compact Home 016*, Germany



Corning Museum of Glass' *mobile hot shop*, New York



Crosson Clarke Carnachan Architects' *Hut on Sleds*, New Zealand

Appendix

A. Land use: In-depth research

The content below provides more detail on the locations explored through the land use research stream:

PRIVATE LAND ZONED FOR ARTIST STUDIO

While the City of Vancouver has very little land that identifies *artist studio* (either Class A, Class B or both) as a permissible use¹, in conversation with City staff, it was identified that this land is where it would be easiest to locate a temporary mobile artist studio. These locations would still require a permit for the studio as well as a license for the studio use.

The City does not have a temporary use permit (TUP) system similar to many other municipalities which would allow a temporary use that is not included in the existing zoning. Limited-term permits are generally limited to a specific time period, i.e. three months, two years. The City did amend the zoning to allow for some temporary uses in specific zones.

Without a temporary use permit system, a temporary, mobile artist studio on private land will require a permit and licensing application, which can take some time. This type of location would also require a partnership with the landowner. (It could be an 'ask for forgiveness, not permission' situation.)

Potential sites:

- Industrial or commercial land that is zoned for an artist studio and has land available for a temporary, mobile artist studio such as a parking lot, loading area or other available land
- Parking lots in locations zoned for artist studios, see <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2015/nov/10/council-rejects-plans-london-car-park-800-artists-studios-southwark-peckham>; <https://www.lscgallery.com/the-z-lot>

Class A Artist Studio:

"The use of premises for the production of dance, live music, creative writing, painting, drawings, pottery or sculpture, video, moving or still photography, none of which involves amplified sound or one or more of the materials or processes specified under artist studio—class B."

Class B Artist Studio:

"The use of premises for the production of: (a) dance or live music involving electronically amplified sound; (b) moving or still photography (excluding video) involving on-site film processing; or (c) paintings, drawings, pottery or sculpture involving the use of fibreglass, epoxy and other toxic or hazardous materials or one or more of the following processes: welding, woodworking, spray painting, silk screening or fired ceramics."

Definitions taken from the [City of Vancouver: Zoning and Development By-law Section 2](#), April 2021.

¹ Studios can be a part of a residence, home or apartment, throughout the City, and are permitted for what the City identifies as a home-craft use. This is an option for artists and cultural producers who own their own residence and have the space for a studio. But these zones would not permit a studio outside of the residential space. See *Artist Studio Guidelines* at <https://guidelines.vancouver.ca/A007.pdf>.

PRIVATE LAND NOT ZONED FOR ARTIST STUDIO

While there is the potential for an artist studio inside of residential units (as predicated in the forthcoming Eastside Arts Society’s article entitled *Handbook for Visual Artists Working at Home in Vancouver*), locating an artist studio on land that does not have supportive zoning would require a change to the Zoning By-law, or a City-wide by-law similar to the temporary use by-law for temporary outdoor patios. An artist studio on private land not zoned for an artist studio could potentially be permitted if the City adopted such a by-law.

Developing such a by-law is generally a timely process.

→ At this time, no sites have been identified that could be considered for this

SCHOOL DISTRICT-OWNED LAND

In communication with the School District’s facilities planning staff, it was noted that the School District is currently not considering closing any schools, based on direction of the School Board. Given this decision, there are School District assets that are under-utilized and could be considered for a temporary, mobile artist studio. However, staff would need to know more about the programming, duration of stay, form of studio, and if there is inclusion of Indigenous cultural practices. The School District would also recommend an initiative that was developed with a specific school staff and/or parent advisory council.

→ The School District does not support a partnership at this time; however, if a parent advisory council and/or school principal were supportive of this project, it might be feasible

STREET RIGHTS-OF-WAY

The Thingery project—a tool-lending library based in a shipping container on a road right-of-way—provides an example of a *temporary* publicly accessible structure. The Thingery has two locations in Vancouver: adjacent to Woodland Park in East Vancouver, and next to the Arbutus Corridor on the West Side. While the Thingery could provide a prototype for the FLEET project, City staff has stressed that it was a very complicated process to get the Thingery approved and located.

The Thingery has been placed in spaces that are away from any existing structure—next to a park or a bicycle path—in order to avoid triggering any fire safety issues. They are also located on street rights-of-way, and were located in partnership with the Street Activities group in the City of Vancouver’s Engineering Services. However, the Thingery required review by the Development, Building and Permitting department in order to obtain the required permit and licence. Given that the sites were City-owned land, the applications were highly scrutinized out of concern about liability for the City. If this

process were to be pursued, given the current backlog in permitting at the City, staff estimate a year-long process toward approval. Staff also identified that accessing utilities from a road right-of-way could be very challenging.

While street rights-of-way could be considered for an art studio, given the time commitment to get a studio put in place it would not be an ideal approach for a temporary project.

- If this option were to be pursued, ideal locations would be next to a park, an open public space, or similar space

CITY-OWNED PARKING LOT

The City of Vancouver owns a number of parking lots that are under-utilized. This would be a good option for a temporary mobile studio provided that the parking lot was in an area zoned for artist studio, and provided it was a safe enough location for a studio where artists might store their tools and projects.

- City staff made suggestions of possible sites of City-owned under-utilized parking lots (Gastown, Olympic Village SkyTrain)

PARKS

Parks in the City of Vancouver are under the jurisdiction of the [Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation](#) (Park Board). Currently, the Park Board manages the [Fieldhouse Activation Program](#) (use of former caretaker units by artists-in-residence) at 23 parks across the city, with 14 of those dedicated to arts and social engagement. The residencies are three-year terms (2022–2024), with an annual requirement of 350 hours of a community presence.

Locating a temporary mobile artist studio in a park in Vancouver would require the support of staff and approval by the Park Board. Currently, Park Board staff is seeking to locate a donated tiny house (on-wheels) as an artist studio in a park. Given the time and potential complexity of locating a temporary mobile art studio in a park, the best opportunity at this time may be to learn from the work staff is already doing to locate the tiny house in a park.

The artist-in-residence programs at Fieldhouses do offer an opportunity to co-locate: place a temporary mobile art studio in the street adjacent to one of the existing Fieldhouse programs in order to access washrooms, power and running water. Park Board staff have indicated a willingness in working with Other Sights on a temporary artist studio located adjacent to one of the Fieldhouses. However, engineering department staff have indicated that this process will be time consuming and complex.

Park with existing art and social engagement residencies are:

- Aberthau House (in West Point Grey Community Centre)
- Burrard View Park
- Clinton Park
- Elm Park
- Falaise Park
- Hadden Park
- MacLean Park
- Memorial South Park
- Moberly Park
- Oak Park
- Pandora Park
- Riley Park
- Second Beach
- Slocan Park

- At this time, no park has been identified as a priority, but may be done in conjunction with a community centre (see below)

COMMUNITY CENTRES

There are 24 community centres in Vancouver that are operated by the Park Board and maintained by the City. The Park Board partners with the [Community Centres Association](#) to offer three one-year [Artists in Communities](#) residencies at community centres that have been selected for the program. The successful artists receive a \$10,000 artist fee and \$2,000 for materials. Current residencies are at Raycam, Kitsilano and Hastings Community Centres (2019 residencies extended to 2021 due to the pandemic).

In communication with Park Board staff members about the opportunity to locate a mobile artist studio on the grounds of a community centre, they identified that there would need to be a benefit offered to the community which would be supported by both Park Board staff and the specific Community Centre Association.

While locating at a community centre could be an opportunity, City and Park Board staff will need more information about the potential benefit the artist would offer to the community, the duration of residency, siting of the studio, amenities needed for the studio, and how the program would be operated—i.e. how would artists be selected for this program.

City and Park Board staff have indicated an interest in meeting with Other Sights to discuss this opportunity.

- At the first meeting with Park Board staff for Arts, Culture and Decolonization in June 2021, there was support for this project; however, in order to gain traction The FLEET project would need to incorporate a [decolonized approach](#) which, at this time, is in its infancy of being shaped

INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Institutions of higher education in Vancouver have zoning that may permit an on-site mobile artist studio, as the zone states that the use can be determined as to whether it would be for institutional uses, limited to a school—university or college. This provides a fair bit of flexibility in terms of land use, and could accommodate a temporary mobile artist studio.

These locations would require a partnership with the institution. Contact was made with Langara College and Emily Carr University of Art + Design, with Langara following up on the opportunity.

- Langara instructional staff supported this idea provided that funding and resources would be made available, and that Langara facilities could offer space (for example, the portables, if needed); however, Langara instructional staff would want to be able to choose the artists

TRANSLINK

We spoke to TransLink’s public art coordinator who previously worked with Other Sights and was excited by the idea of this project. The coordinator cited the project that Turner award-winning [architecture team Assemble did for the Seven Sisters’ tube station in London](#), and the potential of connecting artists with transit spaces.

SkyTrain and Coast Mountain Bus Company (CMBC) independently operate the public transit modes with oversight by TransLink. Any opportunity to create artist studio space with TransLink would require conversations with the operators. The coordinator was happy to begin facilitating those conversations, and to pursue any opportunities if Other Sights were interested in working with TransLink. Any project would have to follow an artist-in-residence approach, with public engagement being included as a component of the project, while recognizing that artists need time and space to work independently. The coordinator also mentioned that there is a photography club among transit staff members who would be interested in having the opportunity to work with an artist on their craft. The issue of mental health of front line transit workers during the pandemic was also touched upon, and the potential to have an artist-in-residence that can work with staff for the benefit of either/both operators.

The coordinator’s key questions were regarding how long the temporary mobile studios would operate, and when the project would start. These are questions for Other Sights to consider, with the understanding that if a pilot project goes forward it would probably be starting in Fall 2021.

- Opportunity for further discussion that could lead, in time, to a site(s) for a studio as a collaboration with TransLink’s public art program

GRANVILLE ISLAND

Granville Island is owned by the federal government and thus under different land use regulations. It is developed as per the interests of the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC). CMHC completed a major land use plan in 2017. *Granville Island 2040*—the 20-year land use plan—includes goals to “[c]reate a Market District by providing more Market uses in adjacent buildings and sites” and “[c]reate a more dynamic, risk-enabling and resilient arts, crafts and culture community.” These would suggest that a temporary mobile artist studio would fit with the long-term vision of the site.

→ During the course of the feasibility study we were unable to connect with Granville Island planning staff

MOBILE UNIT

Mobile units are treated as vehicles in the City Zoning By-law and are not subject to the same restrictions as other structures, such as shipping containers. This permits more freedom in the opportunity to locate a mobile unit, but does entail some restrictions. A mobile unit can only stay parked in any one area for three hours, or longer if no complaint is made. The City of Vancouver is currently struggling with this in terms of RV housing in a number of locations around Vancouver, and could be a sensitive issue to locate a temporary mobile artist studio at a public location for longer than three hours.

However, a wheeled artist studio could be located in a parking spot for a longer period of time given it has permission of the building's landowner (based on where it is parked) and that the zoning of the area permits the use. This is exemplified with food trucks around the City of Vancouver that are located in sites that permit a food truck and/or which have permission of the property in front of which it is parked. An example of this is [Thank You Pizza](#), a food truck parked in front of [Hunnybee Bruncheonette](#) at 789 Gore Avenue. Hunnybee is open from 8–3:30 daily, and Thank You Pizza operates from 4–9pm four nights a week.

→ Locations and use of this form of an artist studio are to be determined
→ See articles: <https://vancouversun.com/entertainment/local-arts/art-seen-art-installation-in-a-school-bus-explored-new-frontier-in-space>; <http://vangalleries.com/>

B. Land use: City of Vancouver By-law no. 12725 regarding temporary expedited patios

BY-LAW NO. 12725

**A By-law to Amend
Zoning and Development By-law No. 3575
Regarding Temporary Permission to Carry on a Use Outside of a
Completely Enclosed Building**

THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF VANCOUVER, in public meeting, enacts as follows:

1. This By-law amends the indicated provisions of the Zoning and Development By-law No. 3575.

2. In section 10, Council adds the following new section 10.29A in the correct numerical order:

“10.29A Temporary permission to carry on a use outside of a completely enclosed building

10.29A.1 Notwithstanding a condition of use in a district schedule requiring that a use be carried on wholly within a completely enclosed building, the Director of Planning may permit a use to be carried on outside of a completely enclosed building for a period up to and including October 31, 2020, and may vary any other regulation in a district schedule required to enable that use for that period.”

3. A decision by a court that any part of this By-law is illegal, void, or unenforceable severs that part from this By-law, and is not to affect the balance of this By-law.

4. This By-law is to come into force and take effect on the date of its enactment.

ENACTED by Council this 30th day of June, 2020

Signed _____ “Kennedy Stewart”
Mayor

Signed _____ “Rosemary Hagiwara”
Acting City Clerk

C. Cultural engagement: Shared insights on proposed typologies

Here are more insights that were shared during the cultural engagement interviews as it relates to proposed FLEET typologies:

Typology	Local precedence	Pros	Cons
Pre-fabricated Shipping container	Trillium Park North (EarthHand Gleaners Society)	→ Built-in frame and side door	→ High initial cost to transport → Moisture issues without proper insulation
On-wheels Moveable studio (mobile tiny home)	Magic Emporium tiny house (formerly at Trout Lake Community Centre)	→ Easy to build and use	→ Easy to hitch and steal
On-wheels Self-propelled truck	Retrofitted bus (SiteFactory)	→ Easily moveable → Can travel to various shows and festivals, and serve as a pop-up → Exposure to diverse audiences	→ Cost to fill gas tank → Difficult to secure long-term parking (3-hour max in Vancouver) → May require training to use air brakes/drive → Not accessible for those with a physical disability or without a driver's licence
Custom-built Float home/ water vessel	Blue Cabin floating art residency	→ Unique structure	→ Expensive to moor and move → Need to winterize deck → High maintenance cost

D. Cultural engagement: Additional survey findings

Practice + use of space

Respondents practice these art forms:

Applied arts: Architectural research, commercial art & industrial design	2.6%
Crafts	13.0%
Culinary arts	0%
Dance	5.2%
Digital arts: Film, gaming, tech, video	13.0%
Literature, spoken word & storytelling	10.4%
Multi-disciplinary	24.7%
Music/sound	7.8%
Textile arts: Beading & weaving	10.4%
Theatre: Adults/kids, circus arts, puppet show	9.1%
Visual arts #1: Comic strips, graphic design, illustrations	2.6%
Visual arts #2: Drawing, engraving, paintings, photography	50.6%
Visual arts #3: Installations, pottery, sculpture	28.6%
Visual arts #4: Mixed techniques	39.0%
Woodworking + carving	3.9%
Other: Research; comedy; metal art; textile arts: printing, stitching, dyeing, mixed media; social/participatory arts; clown	9.1%

Respondents use (or would use) studio space to:

Attend or hold meetings, digital or in-person	48.1%
Do admin/promotions, computer work (office tasks)	46.8%
Conduct research/brainstorm	57.1%
Do my art/work	88.3%
Hold classes and/or workshops	42.9%
Offer public studio tours	41.6%
Sell my art	45.5%
Showcase my work (presentation space)	54.5%
Store my work, tools and equipment	75.3%
Write grants and other proposals	40.3%
ALL THE ABOVE	23.4%
Other: Collaborate with other artists; would be contingent on the project or length of residency; move, meditate, strengthen	3.9%

Tenure

SURVEY RESPONDENTS:

“I think that rental and residencies are very different scenarios. For a studio space rental, I would be looking for something long-term and secure. For an artist residency, a six-month period is an ideal amount of time to work on a single project.

“For my practice, a good situation would be one-year of part-time access to a small space shared with another artist (three days a week). I would prioritize making music in the space, and do admin work elsewhere.”

“Artists need long-term stability for where they work.”

Placement

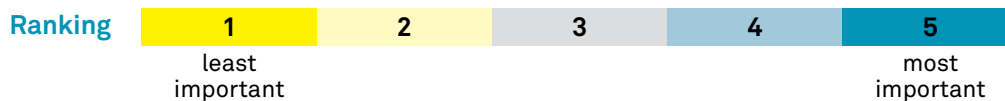
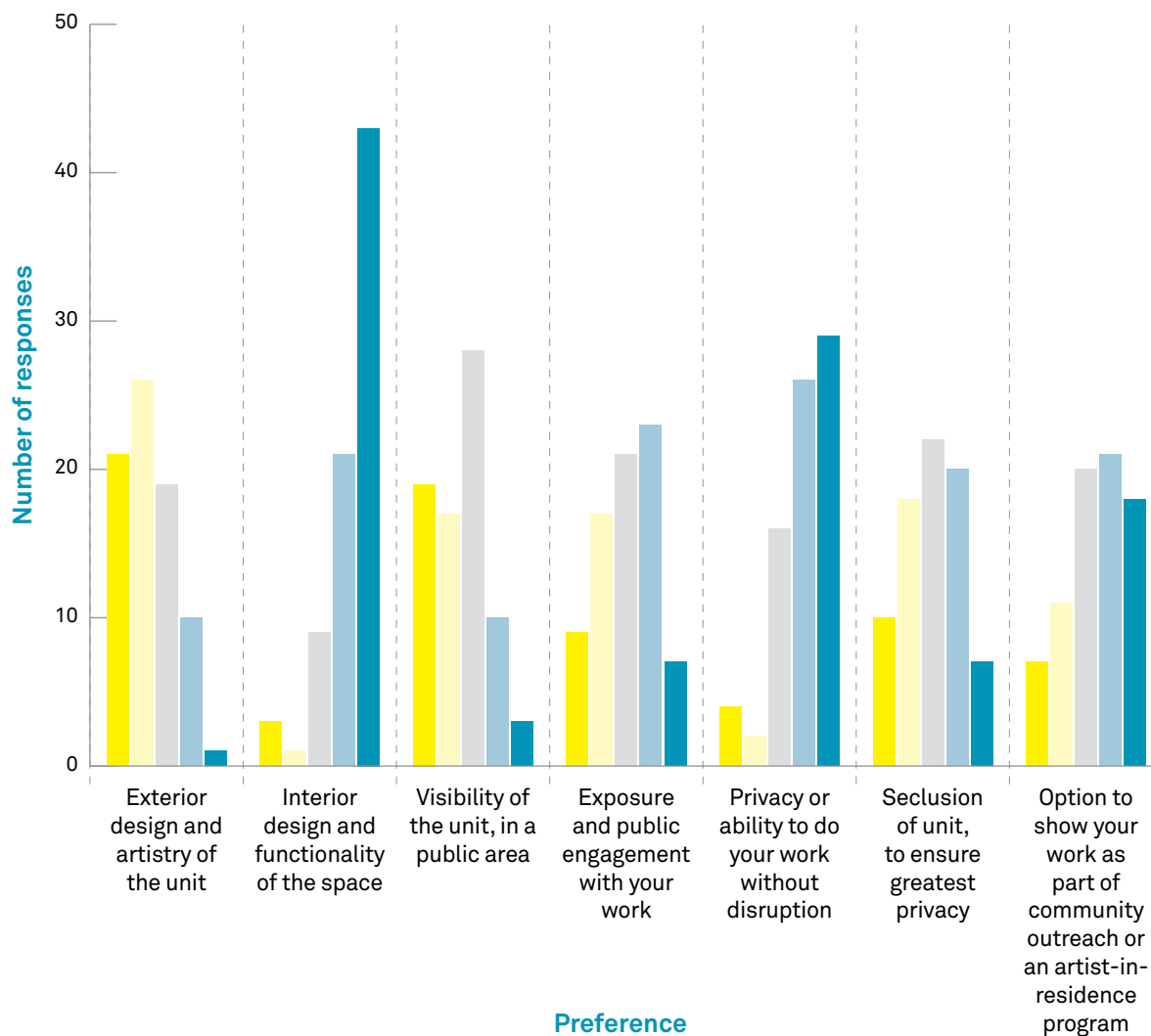
SURVEY RESPONDENTS:

“It would be nice to have a central unit/area accessible by all residency participants/unit members; a place to meet one another and discuss our work would be a big perk.”

“Build small communities of FLEETs, not silos. Look at the carver’s pavilion at Britannia Community Centre as an excellent example of a secured outside location.”

FLEET goal ranking

Respondents rank the following in terms of importance for the FLEET operational model:



Best practices + advice

- Safety first!
- Group FLEET studios to create artistic community
- Give artists flexibility in terms of lengths of stay
- A final exhibition or presentation at the end of a residency drastically improves engagement and the artist's commitment to the residency itself

“Proximity to other artists, encountering each other’s work, methods and craft, and the nurturing of the creative community.”

—SURVEY RESPONDENT ON THE BEST ASPECT OF ARTIST RESIDENCIES