

**Memorandum of Understanding
Between the Province and the City of Vancouver
Questions and Answers**

What is the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)?

- The MoU is an agreement between the provincial government and the City of Vancouver setting out the roles and responsibilities of each level of government regarding the development of new social and supportive housing on 12 city-owned properties.
- It also outlines the process that will be followed leading to the issuing of development and building permits.
- In addition, it identifies the target tenant groups for each of the 12 sites, and the approximate number of housing units that could be built on each site.

What is “social and supportive” housing?

- Social housing includes both public housing (housing that is jointly funded by the provincial and federal governments and predominantly managed by the Province) and housing that is owned and maintained by non-profit and cooperative housing providers.
- Supportive housing is a type of social housing that provides affordable housing opportunities for individuals to stabilize their personal situations and re-establish connections with the community.
- Supportive housing is linked to support services that are voluntary and flexible to meet the residents’ needs and preferences.
- The level of support may vary, and some support services are provided by on-site staff, while in other instances support may be delivered on an outreach basis.
- Part of the work of the support staff is to link tenants to services that are available at other locations throughout the community, in places like community health centres, schools, recreation and community centres.

Will all of the new housing units be supportive housing?

- No. For most of the developments, one-third to one-half of the units will be supportive housing.
- The other units will be for singles in core need (having to pay more than 30 per cent of their gross household income to rent a studio unit in the private market), with priority given to low-income singles in Vancouver who are homeless, at risk of homelessness, or living in a downtown SRO.
- A couple of the developments in the downtown area may be developed for people with higher needs, in which case most if not all of the units may be supportive housing.

Is this MoU a final agreement?

- It still needs to be approved by Vancouver City Council.
- Staff is recommending that Council schedule a meeting on Dec. 12 to hear from interested members of the public before voting on the MoU.

Why is this being proposed now?

- This has come forward now as a result of recent policies and strategies developed by both levels of government to address the many issues involved with homelessness.
- On Oct. 12, 2007, as part of an expansion of its provincial housing strategy, Housing Matters BC, the Province announced it would pay all the costs to design new social and supportive housing developments on city-owned sites through to the issuing of development and building permits.
- This decision to fund pre-development design costs will expedite the construction of new social and supportive housing to address the current homelessness situation.
- The MoU also supports the recommendations and goals of various civic initiatives related to housing, including:
 - City of Vancouver's Supportive Housing Strategy, unanimously endorsed by Council in June, 2007, citing the need to work with the Province to identify funding for new supportive housing and to locate the housing across the city in zones where apartments are permitted;
 - Project Civil City, with one objective to increase housing opportunities and eliminate homelessness, with at least a 50 per cent reduction by 2010;
 - Homelessness Action Plan, with one priority to develop 3,200 units of supportive housing; and,
 - Vancouver Homelessness Funding Model, which proposed the City make 12 or more of its sites available for supportive housing and recommended property tax exemption.

How were these 12 sites selected?

- The City has a long-standing policy of purchasing sites for social housing and leasing sites to non-profit societies which manage the housing. There are currently over 8,700 social housing units on City-owned land.
- The City purchases sites that are zoned for multiple residential development in accordance with its priorities, such as replacing the SRO hotels in the downtown or locating social housing across the city.
- The City owns or has options for 20 sites (identified on the City's web site). The 12 selected sites are suitable for housing single people.

Where will the tenants come from?

- They are residents of the City of Vancouver who live in unsafe and insecure housing, or have no housing at all.
- Homelessness is a problem that affects all areas of the city, and people who need the programs and services offered through supportive housing live in all neighbourhoods.
- People who need supportive housing benefit from being close to family and friends in their neighbourhoods.
- This is part of a city-wide solution to a city-wide problem.

If Council approves the MoU, does that mean these social and supportive housing developments are approved and construction can begin?

- No. The MoU identifies a public input and approval process that needs to be followed.
- The MoU requires that project-specific Open Houses be held to provide information to local residents. These will happen in the first few months of 2008.
- Residents will be able to review and provide comments on the proposed development as part of the development approvals process.
- A staff report will be prepared with recommendations for the Development Permit Board identifying issues that will need to be addressed by the non-profit society and its team that is developing the housing, and will include the results of the neighbourhood open house meeting.
- Where appropriate, an Operations Management Plan may be required, which describes how the development will be managed and provides a point of contact for neighbours.
- The public can also provide input at the Development Permit Board.

Can the Development Permit Board make decisions on the target tenant groups for each development?

- The Development Permit Board has no jurisdiction over tenant composition, and provincial law prohibits discrimination against tenancies on the basis of health status, among other things.
- In making the decision on whether to approve the project, factors considered relate to land use and physical elements such as building design, density, massing, exterior finish materials, traffic and parking.

When could construction begin?

- It is anticipated construction could begin on at least six of the sites before the end of 2008.
- It usually takes just over a year to build developments such as these, and tenants usually start occupying the building in stages once the programs and services are in place.
- In the meantime, there are a number of housing initiatives available and underway to provide affordable housing options.
- These include the Rental Assistance Program and the Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters (SAFER) program, that provide direct cash assistance to low income working families and seniors who rent in the private market.
- Non-profit societies have been selected to run 11 SROs in Vancouver recently purchased by the Province and the City, and they will start managing these developments on Dec. 1.
- Construction is also underway on social and supportive housing for the Woodward's development, and 65 E. Hastings St., both under the Provincial Homelessness Initiative.

Who will be managing the twelve housing developments?

- The Province will be issuing a proposal call to non-profit societies seeking organizations to manage and operate these developments, including how they plan to provide the required support services. (The support services may be provided by Vancouver Coastal Health, the non-profit societies themselves, or other organizations that the non-profits identify.)
- The successful proponents will be identified early in the new year, so they can describe their intended program and management plan for the project-specific Open House sessions.

What is an Operations Management Plan?

- If during the approvals process, a significant number of questions arise about the management of a development, an Operations Management Plan will be required.
- It is a public document describing the development and associated programs and services, and provides a point of contact for neighbours.
- The plan will include a Community Advisory Committee, with representation from nearby residents, businesses, institutions, the Vancouver Police Department, as well as representatives from the non-profit operator and the support service provider.
- The committee will be a forum for discussion of issues and concerns that may have an impact on the neighbourhood.
- The plan will include a description of the tenant profile, support services including hours of operation and schedule, and the staffing model.

- If required, the Operations Management Plan would be a condition of Development Permit approval, and requires that the Plan be finalized and approved before the occupancy permit is issued.
- An example of an existing Operations Management Plan can be found at: www.vancouver.ca/commsvcs/housing/supportive/housingstrategy/pdf/TriageOpManPlan.pdf

General Questions on Supportive Housing

Where can supportive housing be located in Vancouver?

- The location requirements of supportive housing are not different from other higher density residential buildings. New supportive housing will be located within zones that permit apartments. Accessibility to transit and to commercial and community services are features in these zones.
- There are nearly 40 supportive housing buildings with close to 2,000 units located in a number of neighbourhoods in Vancouver.
- Mental illness and addictions are health conditions that can affect people of all socio-economic backgrounds living in all city neighbourhoods and City Council policy is to locate supportive housing throughout the city.
- This provides opportunities for people to access this kind of housing where family and friends are nearby, and where they are familiar with the services and the neighbourhood.
- City Council policy is that wherever reasonably possible, new supportive housing should be located to support geographic balance across the city.

What staffing is provided at supportive housing?

- The staffing levels vary, depending on a tenant's needs.
- In some cases, staff support is provided on an outreach basis, with housing support workers visiting tenants' homes on a regular basis.
- In other cases, staff may be located on site, with hours ranging from daytime only, to 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- A thorough assessment is completed with each supportive housing candidate, to determine what model of supportive housing would be the best fit for that person.

