

City Staff Report

Report Date: August 18, 2017

Meeting Date: August 29, 2017

File: OCPZRZ2017-25

To: City Manager

From: Director of Development Services

Subject: Elliott Street Supportive Housing Project Open House Summary

Purpose

Summarize public input received at the August 15th Open House held by BC Housing at the Seniors Centre from 5:30 to 7:30 pm regarding the proposed Elliott Street supportive housing project.

Summary

- 171 members of the public signed into the open house, 80 written submissions were received at the evening of the open house, and 1 submission was received after the open house (which were all summarized together). 2 emails were submitted prior to the open house, with comments from these summarized separately.
- 3 members of Staff were present, 2 representatives from BC Housing were present, and 1 representative from JTW Consulting (consultant on BC Housing) were present.
- There were also 14 individuals from the Quesnel and Shelter Support Society (QSSS) present as project proponents.
- Most individuals who submitted Open House comments were West Quesnel residents, business owners, or both.
- Although more than half of all the participants had an overall positive stance on the proposal the West Quesnel Business Owners and Resident submissions show just over half of those respondents had an overall negative stance on the project with 39% being clearly positive.

Recommendation

THAT Council receives Administration Report #92C-17 regarding the August 15, 2017 open house public consultation held by BC Housing for information on the Elliott Street Supportive Housing proposal.

Attachments

- 1) Open House posters displayed at meeting
- 2) Open House survey

Open House Survey Summary

BC Housing held an open house at the Seniors Centre on August 15th. There were seven poster boards on display (as attached) in which the public was asked to view to obtain information on the project. They were provided a survey sheet (attached) as they entered the facility and advised of the project proponents in the gallery whom they could direct questions or seek additional information. They were asked provide their comments on the survey to City Staff or proponents at that entrance tables prior to leaving.

Connection to the Project

- Of the total 81 submissions, 63% of participants identified themselves as either a resident of West Quesnel, a business owner in West Quesnel, or both (as shown in Figure 1).

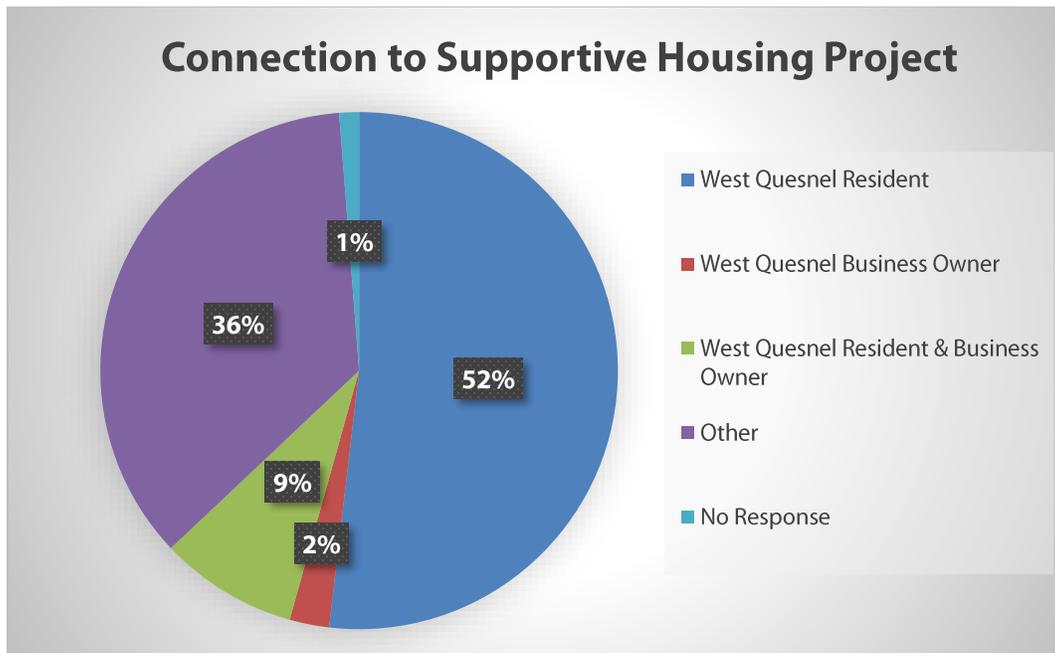


Figure 1: Connection to Supportive Housing Project

Overall Stance on the Project

- Of the total 81 submissions, more than half of responses were overall positive towards the proposed Elliott St supportive housing project (as shown in Figure 2).

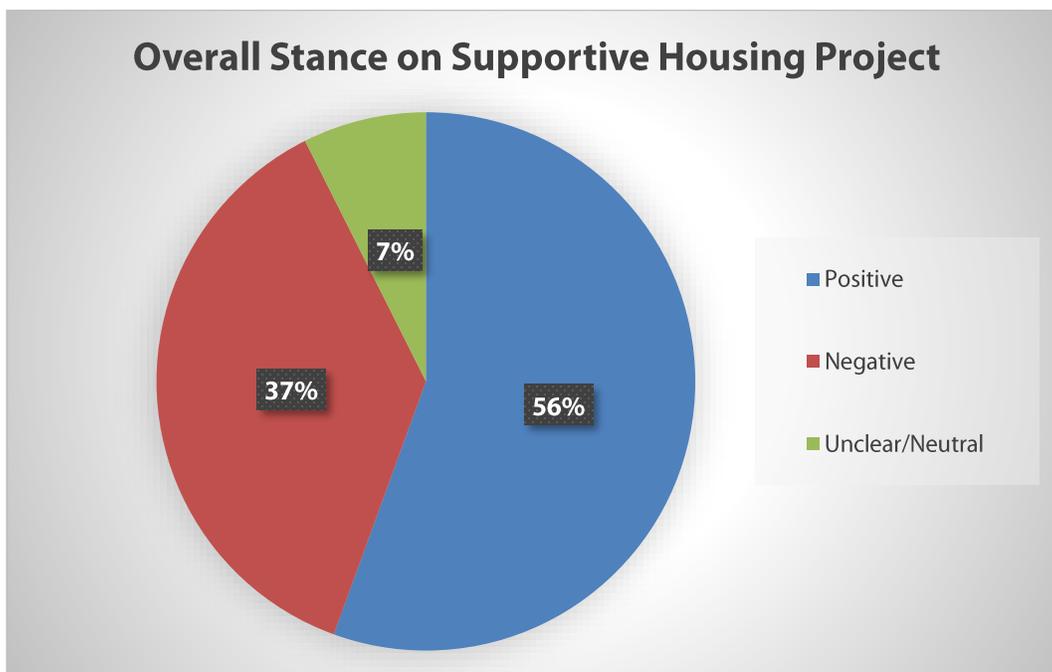


Figure 2: Overall Stance on Supportive Housing Project



West Quesnel Residents &/or Business Owners' Stance on the Project

- Of the 51 responses that were from West Quesnel Residents, West Quesnel Business Owners, or both, 39% had an overall positive stance on the project, 55% had an overall negative stance, and 6% were unclear or neutral on their position (as shown in Figure 3).

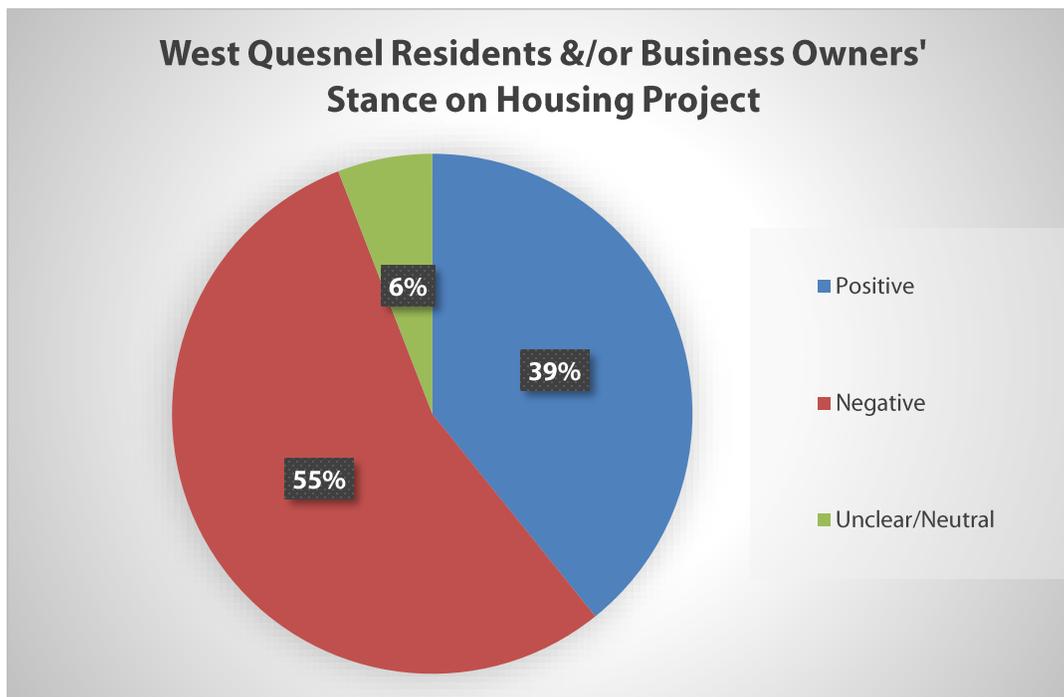


Figure 3: Overall Stance on Supportive Housing Project from West Quesnel Residents, West Quesnel Business Owners, or both

Comments on Location

- When asked for feedback on the proposed location for the facility, responses were diverse. However, 32 responded that the proposed location was great or fine (see Figure 4).
- The second most common response was that the proposed site is too close to the school/school playground (21 responses).
- Thirdly, there were 18 responses that commented on considering a different location (such as existing buildings, non-residential areas, or entirely out of the City). It is important to note that many of these comments did not include a specific rationale for why a different site would be better. Where reasons were provided, they included fears on safety (drugs, alcohol, theft, and other crimes), loss of property value, or simply not wanting it close to their home, business, neighbourhood, or on the Westside in general.
- The fourth most common response (17 responses) was that the proposed location is good because of its close proximity to services (such as shopping, the Northern Health building, and the Native Friendship Centre), while some participants felt the site was not close enough to services such as the RCMP station or the hospital.
- Other concerns against the site included that it is too close to the daycare; the Westside is already struggling/burdened; concerns regarding the neighbouring area (close proximity to drug houses, liquor store); too close to footbridge; too close to the Aboriginal family centre; too close to my home, business, or neighbourhood; traffic concerns (such as lack of pedestrian



infrastructure on and near Elliott St, logging truck traffic, and high vehicle speeds); property value loss; concerns about land stability/floodplain; and that the proposed location is too far out of the public eye/scrutiny.

- Other concerns in favour of the proposed site included that the current site is too small, overcrowded, unsafe, falling apart or has traffic issues (suggesting a relocation is required) and that there is an opportunity to improve the area with this new facility.

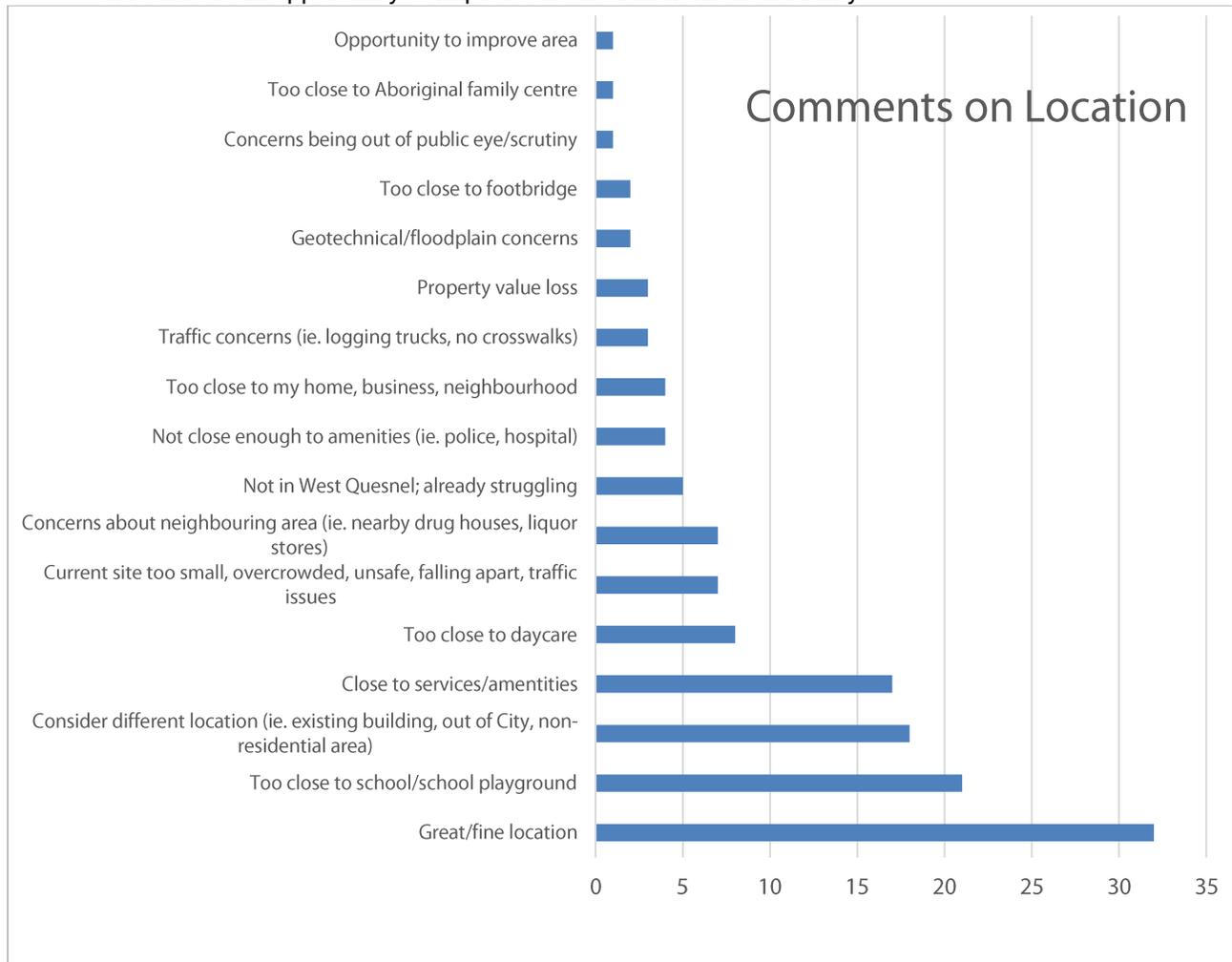


Figure 4: Number of Times Specific Comments on Location were raised

Comments on Good Neighbour Agreement

- When asked what they would like to see included in the Good Neighbour Agreement (GNA), responses were abundant and extensive (see Figure 5).
- The most common response/suggestion for the GNA was assurances around safety and security for the neighbourhood, residents, and businesses with some suggesting more RCMP or community policing involvement (9 responses).
- The second most common suggestion was around neighbourhood cleanliness and the need for a clean up regime/plan (7 responses).
- The third most common responses were (6 responses for each):
 - Respect for each other (such as respecting privacy and quiet of neighbours) and respect for the premises and surrounding areas (such as no loitering, littering, or panhandling);
 - Zero tolerance for drugs/alcohol; and



- Accountability (ensuring that commitments in the GNA are carried out and that tenants/facility users are accountable for their actions).
- The fourth most common responses were (4 responses for each):
 - Ensuring beauty/improvement of the area by being committed to community enhancement, making sure the building enhances the area, and setting up a beautification program;
 - Setting up an advisory group; having a first point of contact for concerns; and having regular meetings/information sessions; and
 - Enforcing rules for facility users (such as curfews and ensuring emergency beds are only available up to a certain hour).
- The fifth most common responses were (3 responses for each):
 - Respectful, effective, open, and ongoing communication;
 - Having a safe needle disposal/clean injection sites; and
 - A mechanism to identify and correct problems.

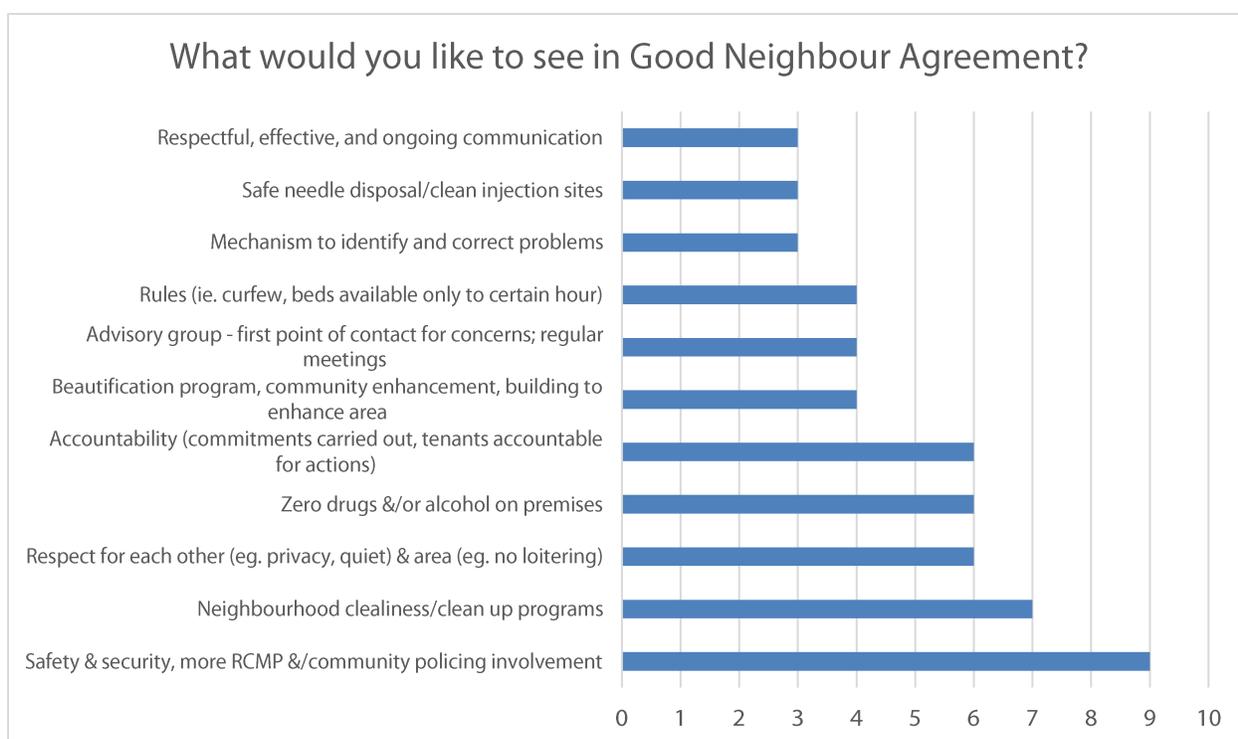


Figure 5: Number of Times Specific Suggestions for GNA were raised

- There were a number of other suggestions for the GNA that were raised by one or two individuals and are summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Other Comments Related to GNA

Extend Good Neighbour Boundary (up to 3 km)
Employ a "3 strikes, remove from program" rule
Evict tenant if caught intoxicated, vandalizing, being delinquent
Set up an Elliott St. Committee for business revitalization
Provide financial support for business with clean up/graffiti removal
Involve local businesses in facility operations (eg. food programs)
Invite community members to building/improvement projects
Continue education on addictions issues



Use Harm Reduction
 Have oversight of facility users (but not RCMP)
 Have well maintained landscaping of site
 Transparency
 Ban anyone with criminal/sexual interference history
 Separate alcoholics from hard drug users
 24 hour presence
 Zero crime tolerance
 Assurances that facility users are working towards independence and employment
 Assurances that current model that is not working will be changed for the better at new site
 Mandatory mental health/drug/alcohol treatment

Additional Comments

Support/pleased with efforts/housing needed/good idea/big improvement than current	27
Fear of crime, need more RCMP, safety concerns	7
Current site is “a flop house”; current safety issues (police, ambulance); new facility should be stricter	6
Increase mental and physical supports; require tenants to use supports; current system overstaffed; need for well- trained staff	4
Fear of uncleanliness of area	3
Concerned shelter will not be for locals	3
Need more recovery beds; concerned about if number of beds sufficient in general	3
Maximum timeline for tenant stays?	2
Concerned about drug use being tolerated when people in facility are trying to get clean; concern about whether premises will be drug and alcohol free	2
Speed bumps to slow down traffic	1
Garden on site – involve residents in health eating/living	1
Crosswalk across Elliott St and over to footbridge needed	1
No drop-in impacting people relying on meals	1
Need more public education	1
Safe injection site	1

Process

- Some of the other comments mentioned that the public was never consulted on the project, that there should be a vote with respect to the project, and that there should be a referendum to voice opinions for West Quesnel residents.

To clarify, public consultation has and continues to happen for the project. On June 27th, 2017 Staff recommended that the proponent (BC Housing) host an Open House to consult with the public on the project in advance of a Public Hearing; this recommendation was approved by Council.

The Open House was a form of public consultation on the project where the public could gain further information on the project, ask questions, voice opinions, as well as submit comments/views on the project. Further, consultation is still in progress up to and including the Public Hearing which has yet to be held.

In terms of voting, the project is an initiative of BC Housing’s. The ultimate zoning approval/vote with respect to land use lies with Council, as the elected representatives of the City of Quesnel.

Email Comments Received Prior to the Open House

- Prior to the open house, BC Housing received 2 emails which were later forwarded to Planning Staff.



- Comments/concerns from first email were:
- Full support, but a location in the downtown would be better to remind everyone that homelessness is everybody's problem;
- Important that local leaders and politicians continue to support Seasons House regardless of location;
- Comments/concerns from second email were (from neighbouring property owner with rental property):
- Concerns about tenants privacy, safety, and security (request for tall privacy fence) as they are adjacent to development;
- Difficulty keeping good tenants in future;
- Concerns with noise impacts.