



Community Engagement Report

Proposed Shelter - 2245 6th Avenue, Castlegar

January 2025

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INTRODUCTION

This report provides a summary of community engagement held on January 22, 2025 regarding a proposed year-round shelter at 2245 6th Avenue, Castlegar BC. The project would provide:

- Year-round shelter with 20 beds
- Services for guests such as 24/7 staff presence, 3 meals per day, onsite harm reduction, goal planning and life skills supports, referrals to CDCSS internal programs and other community programs and support groups.
- A permanent replacement for the 10-bed temporary winter shelter at 1660 Columbia Avenue.

This report was submitted to Castlegar City Council on January 30, 2025.

ANNOUNCEMENT – JUNE 2024

On June 14, 2024, the Province [announced](#) the purchase of property at 2245 6th Avenue in Castlegar to build a much-needed year-round shelter.

The Province announced that, through BC Housing, it contributed \$740,000 to purchase the property through the Permanent Housing Plan, as well as \$1.6 million to renovate the building.

ENGAGEMENT COMMUNICATIONS – JANUARY 2025

Webpage

BC Housing launched a dedicated project webpage (letstalkhousingbc.ca/castlegar-2245-6th-avenue) on June 13, 2024. On this page, we will continue to share the latest information on the project as well as community engagement opportunities.

Questions and comments were also received through BC Housing's Community Relations email (communityrelations@bchousing.org). In total, 10 inquiries were received from June 2024 (the date the purchase of the property was announced) to January 2025.

Neighbourhood Update Letter and Invitation – June 2024 and January 2025

On June 14, 2024, BC Housing mailed letters to residents and businesses within 100 meters of the site about the purchase and our intentions for this property (**Appendix A**). This is a standard radius that we use for many BC Housing projects. It also aligns with the City's notification requirement for a Temporary Use Permit application.

On January 14 and 15, 2025 Castlegar & District Community Services Society (CDCSS) hand-delivered letters to residents and businesses within 100 meters of the site inviting them to Neighbourhood

Information Sessions on January 22, 2025. This letter included background information about the proposed project as well as details of the upcoming meetings.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS – SUMMARY (JANUARY 2025)

Event Name and Date	<p>Neighbour Information Sessions Wednesday, January 22, 2025 Mercer Celgar Board Room at The Confluence, 1995 6th Ave, Castlegar</p>
Organizers	<p>BC Housing Project and Community Engagement Team:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kiran Basra, Senior Communications Advisor, Interior, Project & Community Engagement • Alexia Diablo, Senior Communications Specialist, Project & Community Engagement
Presenters	<p>BC Housing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nanette Drobot – Regional Director of Operations • Kenneth Scott – Supportive Housing Advisor • Tyler Baker – Regional Development Director • Andrea Witoszkin – Development Manager <p>Castlegar & District Community Services Society (CDCSS)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reidun Rosi – Executive Director • Deb McIntosh – Manager <p>Facilitator</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anna Wright, Kirk & Co. Consulting <p>Notetaker</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stella Forbes, Kirk & Co. Consulting
Event Audience	<p>Attendees included neighbours, local businesses and other interested community members</p>
Number of Attendees	<p>Per session:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m. – 14 attendees • 4:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. – 9 attendees • 5:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m. – 6 attendees <p>There were 14 members of CDCSS’ Board of Directors and staff members who are also community members that joined the sessions to learn more.</p>

WHAT WE HEARD – SUMMARY

Themes

During all sessions, several consistent themes arose from the questions and discussion. These themes included the following:

- security and safety
- operations
- municipal process and engagement

Topics

Safety

- Concern for safety and security for neighbours (young families, people using the skate park and playground) in the area
- Concerns about people using substances in public spaces in the neighbourhood
- Concerns about potential impacts to nearby businesses (theft, customers not wanting to visit)
- Desire for clear guidelines for guests on behaviour expectations, boundaries, and conflict resolution
- Desire for CDCSS and BC Housing to ensure neighbourhood safety (e.g. perimeter checks, meetings with neighbours, “who to call” information)
- Interest in building security and cameras

Operations

- Interest in general operations and site management details
- Questions and concerns about staffing levels, hours of operation, guest eligibility, and the shelter’s ability to provide adequate support services
- Concerns about ability for guests to access healthcare, employment, or social services elsewhere in the city
- Interest to know more about harm reduction and overdose prevention measures that would be implemented
- Interest in increasing access to substance use treatment facilities or recovery programs

Site Features and Design Elements

- Concern that the proposed building is too small to accommodate 20 shelter guests
- Concern that the fenced outdoor space is not large enough for shelter guests
- Concern that four parking spaces are not enough; comments that overflow parking would impact residential /commercial areas nearby

Development

- Sentiment that a different location should have been chosen

- Questions about site selection, with some seeing proximity to services as a benefit and others fearing potential disruptions to the neighbourhood

Municipal Process and Engagement

- Questions about the Temporary Use Permit (TUP) process and concerns that it bypasses rezoning processes
- Strong concern that neighbours were not notified of both the project and neighbour meetings
- Desire for more inclusive notification to, and engagement with, the community beyond the 100 metres required for the TUP process
- Desire for additional information as it becomes available through regular updates, public meetings, and clear documentation
- Concern that key details, including timelines and information about operations have not been shared

Other

- Concerns about potential reduction in nearby property values

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How will you ensure safety in the neighbourhood?

- We know from operating the current winter shelter that building strong relationships with neighbours helps address concerns and reduce issues.
- The focus is on being a good neighbour. This involves measures like having 24/7 staff, installing security cameras and lighting, having controlled access, conducting regular perimeter checks, and maintaining ongoing dialogue with the community.
- Neighbours would be provided clear contacts for reporting issues and invited to attend regular meetings with CDCSS and other community partners to ensure ongoing problem-solving, an approach that has worked well in the current winter shelter location.

How was this location selected?

- BC Housing identifies a community need and begins searching for available properties.
- During the search, we communicate with city staff to determine site appropriateness and permit requirements.
- In Castlegar, suitable options are limited. Shelter sites are chosen for their central and accessible locations.
- It is accessible to services including public transit and grocery stores. The location also allows shelter staff to coordinate rides to various services.
- Access to community services and transit is key for people without homes but so is feeling part of a neighbourhood. With a remote site, there is no access to services, no regular transit

access and no integration with the community, which is essential for people who are working towards a healthy, stable life.

How would the shelter be staffed?

- At least two experienced staff would be onsite 24/7 to provide support for shelter guests and manage the building.
- Monday to Friday during the day, there would be a manager on site and many other staff members present throughout the day.
- On call services are available after hours and on weekends.

What happens if the shelter reaches capacity?

- The new shelter would double the available beds from 10 temporary winter beds to 20 year-round beds.
- If shelter is at capacity, people would be given information on available resources to help them connect with support systems.

Will substance use be allowed in the shelter and outside on the property?

- The plan allows for substance use on site with specific limitations and staff would use a harm reduction approach. There would be a designated area within the building where substance use is permitted. Guests who use substances would be monitored by staff and cameras, and shelter guests must inform staff before using in the designated area.
- Harm reduction is an important life-saving measure in the current toxic drug crisis. The goal of harm reduction is to prevent the negative consequences of substance use (including saving lives) and to improve health. Harm reduction acknowledges that many people may not be in a position to remain abstinent. This approach also meets people where they are at and provides an option to engage with peers, medical, and social services in a non-judgmental way. Harm reduction approaches and programming are seen as a best practice for engaging with people who have substance use issues.
- We know from other shelters that building strong relationships with guests can help reduce substance use and support progress toward goals like housing or family connections.

Who is responsible for keeping the facility/area clean?

- CDCSS will be responsible for managing and maintaining the property.
- BC Housing and CDCSS are committed to being good neighbours and keeping property maintained, just as any other resident in the neighbourhood would.

Is this shelter and outdoor space large enough for 20 shelter guests?

- The shelter would be purposefully designed to accommodate 20 shelter guests.
- The shelter would have an open space design to prioritize safety and security.

- There would be additional indoor and outdoor amenity space for guests to gather onsite.

Is there enough parking allocated to support shelter operations?

- The site has four surface parking spots, which are regulated by zoning bylaws and parking requirements.

What is the difference between a Temporary Use Permit (TUP) and a rezoning process?

- The process for feedback on a TUP and a rezoning is similar: comments are sent to City Council.
- Rezoning permanently amends the property use, whereas a TUP is a temporary measure. A TUP can also be extended once before a formal rezoning process would be required.
- Emergency shelters and supportive housing are permitted in any zone of the city, subject to the TUP process.

Why were some neighbours not notified of the project and the neighbour meetings?

- Notifications about the project and TUP were hand delivered to addresses within 100 meters, the standard requirement for this process.
- We recognize that the wider community has interest in this project, which is why we have also published a Let's Talk page at letstalkhousingbc.ca/castle-gar-2245-6th-avenue.



Neighbourhood Update

June 12, 2024

2245 6th Avenue, Castlegar

Dear Neighbour,

We are writing to share that BC Housing has purchased the property at 2245 6th Avenue. In this building, we plan to open a year-round shelter with up to 20 beds. This shelter is a response to the urgent need to support people experiencing homelessness in Castlegar. Once open, this will replace the temporary winter shelter at 1660 Columbia Avenue.

This site will require renovations. We will work with the City to secure the necessary approvals for the site's new use as a year-round shelter. We currently expect this shelter to open in 2025. We will share more details about this project as they are available.

The shelter at 1660 Columbia Avenue will re-open in late Fall 2024 to support guests through the 2024/2025 winter season.

About the shelter

This shelter will be open 24/7, year-round. Services will include 24/7 staff onsite, semi-private beds, meals, laundry and shower facilities. There will also be safety and security features for the benefit of shelter guests as well as the surrounding community. This includes controlled access, site fencing, outdoor lighting and security cameras. BC Housing will select a shelter operator in late Summer 2024 through a public Request for Proposals.

People staying in shelters can include seniors, people with disabilities, people who have experienced trauma or poverty, people with health concerns including mental health or substance use challenges, and people who are struggling with the high cost of housing. Shelter guests can access case management, resources and services that address their individual needs and support them on their housing journey.

Community engagement

A caring community can contribute greatly to the success of people transitioning out of homelessness. We commit to keeping lines of communication open throughout this project. We will reach out again to introduce the shelter operator when selected and share a direct phone number for the shelter when it is available.

Stay informed about this project by visiting letstalkhousingbc.ca/castlegar-2245-6th-avenue . You can also email communityrelations@bchousing.org at any time with questions.

Kind regards,
BC Housing

Neighbourhood Update

January 14, 2025

2245 6th Avenue, Castlegar

Dear Neighbour,

We are writing to share an update about the year-round shelter planned for 2245 6th Avenue. We first wrote to you in June 2024 to share that BC Housing purchased the property with plans to open a 20-bed shelter. Once open, this would replace the temporary winter shelter at 1660 Columbia Avenue. You can find more details about this project by visiting letstalkhousingbc.ca/castlegar-2245-6th-avenue.

Development update

This project will require a Temporary Use Permit from the City of Castlegar and the building will need renovations. If all permits are approved, we currently expect the shelter to open later in 2025.

Information sessions

We are pleased to share that we will be hosting in-person information sessions for interested neighbours. Here, neighbours can learn more about the supports and services to be offered at the shelter, find out about project timelines and renovations, meet project partners, ask questions, and find out how to get involved and support the project.

Date: Wednesday, January 22, 2025

Available session times:

- 2:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.
- 4:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.
- 5:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.

Location: Mercer Celgar Board Room at The Confluence, 1995 6th Ave, Castlegar

Each session will have a maximum of 15 neighbours so that we can answer everyone's questions. Priority will be given to direct site neighbours followed by the wider community. If the sessions fill up, we may add one additional session.

Please RSVP for a session by visiting 2245-6th-avenue-shelter.eventbrite.ca or by scanning the QR code below. **Registration is required to attend.**





About the operator

BC Housing selected Castlegar & District Community Services Society (CDCSS) through a fair and open process to operate the shelter and provide services to guests. CDCSS is an experienced non-profit operator that has been working with the most vulnerable in the community for over 40 years. Learn more about CDCSS by visiting cdcsc.ca.

CDCSS would like to express heartfelt gratitude to all the individuals, businesses, and organizations that continue to and have supported the organization in the years prior to support our programs that help the unhoused and vulnerable. CDCSS is committed to continuing community engagement and collaboration with local partners to make a positive impact on the lives of those who need it most.

Questions?

A caring community can contribute greatly to the success of people transitioning out of homelessness. We commit to keeping lines of communication open throughout this project.

We look forward to meeting you at our upcoming information sessions. You can also continue emailing communityrelations@bchousing.org at any time with questions.

Kind regards,

BC Housing

Castlegar & District Community Services Society