

Proposed Modular Housing Project at 838 Ewen Avenue

FAQs

What is being proposed?

838 Ewen Avenue, which was recently purchased by the City of New Westminster and previously accommodated a gas station, is being considered for housing with support services. As proposed, the project would comprise three storeys and 44 units¹ (38 standard and six accessible). Each unit would have its own kitchen and bathroom. Common areas would include indoor amenity and program spaces, as well as a shared laundry. The operating model would include programming for the tenants to assist with their successful tenancy.

Who is the funder and what is the program?

The Provincial Government, as part of its '2017 Budget Update,' is investing \$291 million to support the construction of 2,000 modular supportive housing units for people who are homeless and more than \$170 million to provide 24/7 staffing and support services. This initiative is in response to the growing issue of homelessness throughout British Columbia. New Westminster is one of a number of municipalities across the Province where modular supportive housing projects are being considered.

Why is the City considering this project?

The proposed project is supportive of a number of City policies and priorities related to decreasing homelessness and enhancing housing diversity, choice and affordability. For example, the City's 'Official Community Plan,' which was adopted by Council in 2017, speaks to diversifying the housing stock, providing options to help address homelessness, including those at-risk, and facilitating access to affordable and non-market housing for low-to-moderate income households.

Who would own the land and the housing development?

If the modular housing project was to proceed, the City would retain ownership of the land, and lease the site to BC Housing, the Provincial agency responsible for this initiative. BC Housing would supply the modular housing units and the operating funds and would also be responsible for all site development costs, including ongoing maintenance and decommissioning after use.

How would the project be managed and operated?

The proposed project would be managed by an experienced non-profit operator and staffed to ensure that the tenants are supported. The operator would address any concerns in a timely manner and ensure that the building and grounds are safe and well maintained. A tenant

¹ Initially, the proposed project comprised 41 units (37 standard and four accessible). Through a redesign process to enhance accessibility, three additional units were realized, two of which are accessible.

selection process would be employed to ensure that tenants are suitable candidates for supportive housing in a neighbourhood setting.

Who would live in the proposed project?

The proposed project would provide safe and affordable homes for women over the age of 19 with low-incomes who have experienced homelessness or who are at risk of homelessness, and who would benefit from programming to assist with their successful tenancy.

What is the need for this type of housing?

The '2017 Homeless Count' reported that 29% of the people who are homeless in New Westminster were women. Service providers have expressed concern that this is an underrepresentation as women often use strategies such as couch surfing and doubling up with families and friends, or stay in unsafe situations, rather than stay on the street or access services for the homeless. Between April 2016 and March 2017, Gurney Place, which is the only shelter specifically programmed and staffed to meet the needs of women in New Westminster, turned away 1,558 women during the time period in question.

What are some of the contributing factors to homelessness?

There are various factors which contribute to homelessness for women such as insecure housing and renovations, disability or poor health, childhood abuse or domestic violence, inadequate employment or lack of income, limited support networks including family, mental wellness, and substance use.

What were the criteria for site selection and were other sites considered?

Regarding this funding opportunity, some of the criteria related to site selection were:

- the provision of a City-owned site;
- the ability to accommodate a minimum of 40 to 50 modular units; and,
- the close proximity of amenities and public transit.

Based on the criteria, the City identified four potential sites for consideration - two on the mainland and two in Queensborough. After due diligence work, including taking into account site size, configuration, access, servicing requirements, and costs, three of the sites were eliminated.

Why was this site selected for consideration?

The rationale for selecting this site for the proposed project included: the large size and central location of the site, which affords convenient access to amenities and public transit; the lack of an identifiable use for this recently purchased site; and the fact that the proposed project does not limit the long-term future use of the site for civic or park purposes.

Is this type of housing located elsewhere in New Westminster?

Currently, there are 107 units of transitional and supportive housing specifically addressing the needs of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in New Westminster; all of them located east of Twelfth Street. In addition, there are 36 extreme weather response and 56 year-round emergency shelter beds in New Westminster; again, all of them located east of Twelfth Street.

Are there other benefits to the city related to the proposed project?

In addition to supporting City policies and addressing housing needs, the proposed project would create a more usable site for future civic and park purposes through the provision of fill and servicing at no cost to the City and would enhance vehicular and pedestrian access to the Queensborough Community Centre through a cost sharing agreement with the Province to construct Carter Street. The proposed project would also enhance safety for park users through the orientation of units and windows overlooking the park.

Has the project already been approved?

No, the proposed project has not been approved. To accommodate such a project, the site at 838 Ewen Avenue would require an Official Community Plan amendment, a Rezoning and a Development Permit. To this end, the City has initiated a development approvals process which meets the Local Government Act statutory requirements and is consistent with standard City practice. As part of the development approvals process, the building and landscaping would also go through a review process to ensure a high level of design and that it fits in with the surrounding neighbourhood.

How can I stay informed?

Updated information on the proposed project can be found on the City website:

www.newwestcity.ca/838ewen

An Open House will be held on Tuesday, May 1, 2018 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at the Queensborough Community Centre. This is a great opportunity to learn more about the proposed project, review the plans and speak to the project team.

Who can I contact if I have questions?

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