

QUEENSBOROUGH RESIDENTS FOR RESPONSIBLE COMMUNITY PLANNING

Planning Committee Questions for 838 Ewen Avenue Housing Project

Site Selection Process

1. Is the property at Fenton and Boyd Streets a City-owned property and, if so, has it been considered for the proposed modular housing project?

The properties located between 350 and 382 Fenton Street were identified but not pursued as the form and character of the proposed modular housing project (i.e., a minimum of three storeys) would not be compatible with the surrounding single detached residential neighbourhood. Currently, existing single detached houses are located on three sides. Additionally, a three-storey, multi-family building would require a front yard setback of 3.0 metres and a rear yard setback of 4.6 metres, which would be too restrictive for the preferred design configuration of back to back modular units served by a central corridor. There would also be issues related to privacy (overlook from the rear facing modular units) and potential shadowing of neighbouring properties. These properties have also been identified for possible use as infill housing and park land.

2. What are the other City-owned properties in Queensborough and why have they not been considered?

200 Fenton Street and 838 Ewen Avenue were also considered. 200 Fenton Street was not pursued for the following reasons: (1) pedestrian access was more problematic, particularly for a population who is dependent on public transit and walking, as there are no sidewalks and only one street light on Fenton Street; (2) the nearest public transit stop is 160 metres inbound and 180 metres outbound; (3) the location is further removed from community, leisure and library services; (4) Fenton Street would have to be extended (a minimum of 40 metres) and a forced sewer main and other utilities would have to be bridged to accommodate the extension; (5) there would have to be accommodation for emergency vehicles, which could require a cul-de-sac or hammerhead; (6) there is the presence of surface peat and silty soil which would have to be removed prior to pre-loading and the site is relatively low which would require additional fill; (7) the pre-loading process would take an extended period of time (i.e., 6 to 24 months depending on methodology and type of building foundation); and (8) there would be a need for a storm water management plan, which would likely entail drainage and flood management works, which would have cost implications.

At the May 28, 2018 Regular meeting, Council directed staff to give further consideration to accommodating the proposed modular housing project at 200 Fenton Street. In response, staff prepared a Pre-feasibility Study, which included a Geotechnical Analysis.

3. What are the other City-owned properties in New Westminster and why have they not been considered?

380 Thirteenth Street and 231 Twelfth Street were considered on the mainland. 380 Thirteenth Street was not pursued due to the constraints of the site. More specifically, the triangular shape of the site and its size (1,053 square metres) could not accommodate the minimum number of units (40) required by BC Housing for a modular housing project. Based on a preliminary review, the site could accommodate a maximum of about 20 units. 231 Twelfth Street was not pursued as a

requirement of the funding under the Province's Rapid Response to Homelessness Program is that the site be municipally-owned. The site is currently owned by the Province and prior to any use for residential purposes it would have to undergo significant remediation.

4. How many sites were considered and what are the reasons the other locations were eliminated?

As discussed above, five sites were considered with four not being pursued. Other sites were identified but were far too small to accommodate the minimum number of units (40) required by BC Housing for a modular housing project.

5. Specifically what makes the current proposed site that houses a preschool, daycare, skate park, water park, three play parks, one middle school and one elementary school with portables the right site for this project? Why was this site selected above all others?

The current proposed site requires less site preparation and affords enhanced pedestrian and vehicular access, including by emergency vehicles. The site also affords enhanced access to public transit services (i.e., three nearby bus routes, including a frequent transit network offering 15 minute service), as well as convenient access to community, leisure and library services. The form and character of the proposed development (i.e., three storey, multi-family building) is more compatible with adjacent multi-family developments along Ewen Avenue.

Regarding the above identified uses, they were taken into consideration with safety concerns being addressed as part of the design, policies, programs, resident mix and staffing for the proposed modular housing project. Given that it is a purpose-built facility, a number of concerns can be addressed which would be more difficult in a retrofitted building. Some specific measures (please note that they will be addressed in more detail as part of other questions), include: (1) ensuring 24/7 staffing, which would entail a minimum of two staff at all times, with the support of a supervisor on weekdays and an on-call supervisor at all times; (2) ensuring that staff have appropriate training and skills to support residents, including crisis intervention and trauma informed counseling; (3) instituting a resident selection process, including assessment procedures; (4) requiring program agreements which would address expectations regarding appropriate behaviour related to health and safety; (5) instituting a visitor policy, particularly related to overnight guests – i.e., advanced planning and pre-approval; (6) partnering with Fraser Health related to “in-reach” support services; (7) undertaking individualized care planning for residents to ensure that their needs are being adequately addressed; (8) incorporating a private outdoor area for residents, including contained amenity space for smoking; and (9) conducting property checks at shift changes, which would be a minimum of twice daily. These are but some of the measures to address safety concerns and mitigate risks.

New Westminster is only 15.6 square kilometres and is highly built out. If all of the child care facilities, early learning programs, parks, playgrounds and schools were plotted and guidelines were developed as to minimum distances from such uses, then it would be virtually impossible to create any new emergency shelters or transitional and supportive housing. On the mainland, there are a number of supportive housing projects serving men and women with a history of homelessness and these have proven not to be problematic. They are operated by experienced and well-staffed non-profit organizations; they are in regular communication with City staff; they are involved in their neighbourhoods (e.g., Business Improvement Associations and Residents' Associations); and they are responsive to community needs and concerns.

6. Has anyone considered that not only is Queensborough on a flood plain but that in the immediate area to the proposed site there are sinkhole issues?

This issue was raised by the public at the open house. Prior to issuance of a Building Permit and construction on the site, a geotechnical report prepared by a qualified engineer and meeting the following requirements, would need to be submitted to the City:

https://www.newwestcity.ca/database/files/library/CNW_DOCS_105082_v1_Geotechnical_Soil_Report_Requirements.pdf

Such a report would need to take into account the site specific soil conditions at 838 Ewen Avenue and the surrounding area. Recommendations from the report would be integrated into the Building and Foundation Permits.

7. Why has this site been treated differently than other proposed initiatives and projects in the area? In that the process, although following prescribed steps by law, seems to be at an accelerated rate? The open house occurred May 1, the rezoning signs went up the following day, and 14 days later the project was being presented to the Advisory Planning Commission. We have had projects that have taken months and even years to obtain the rezoning required to begin. This is not the normal timeframe.

As noted, the development approvals process for the proposed modular housing project meets the Local Government Act statutory requirements for consultation for Official Community Plan amendments and Rezoning. It is also consistent with standard City practice and, in some cases, goes beyond. To date, City staff have made a presentation to the Queensborough Residents' Association, the Queensborough Residents for Responsible Community Planning Group and the two Parent Advisory Councils; held an open house; presented to the Community and Social Issues Committee; and reached out to the Gurudwara Sikh Temple and the Port Royal Mom's Group.

The funding for the proposed modular housing project is derived from the Rapid Response to Homelessness Program, which has a deadline of March 31, 2019, and BC Housing is seeking clarity related to the proposed site to inform its funding decisions.

Internal Policies

8. What specific services will Elizabeth Fry offer at this site or at the Queensborough Community Centre for residents of 838 Ewen Avenue?

The following services and supports would be provided:

- 24/7 staffing, which would entail a minimum of two staff at all times, with the support of a supervisor on weekdays and an on-call supervisor at all times;
- community kitchen program on Sundays whereby residents would learn cooking skills and prepare food;
- daily breakfast program available between 7:30 and 11:30 a.m. and daily dinner program available between 5:30 and 6:30 p.m.;
- no-cost laundry facilities for residents;
- support to maintain residencies, including but not limited to directly assisting with room de-cluttering, rent payment and repayment plans;

- assistance in accessing Income Assistance, Disability and Pension benefits, obtaining a BC Identification Card, or establishing a bank account, as appropriate;
- connections to community services and supports such as education and employment opportunities, health and wellness services, and life skills;
- individual and group support services such as community information, life skills, recreation and social programs, as well as a women's wellness group (bio-psycho-social-spiritual model to improve resident quality of life and self-esteem);
- other individualized or periodic supports designed to assist residents in meeting their personal and housing goals, including culturally-specific programs;
- monthly case planning and developing new or revised individual goals; and
- ongoing case planning and needs assessment with quarterly reviews and, at discharge, a second vulnerability assessment.

Has it been decided that the facility will be zero-barrier?

The proposed modular housing project would address the needs of residents and the operator would ensure that residents would have access to a full range of support services.

Will facility residents be permitted to use drugs on site?

Not all people who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness have addiction issues. The proposed modular housing project would serve women, in which significant contributing factors to homelessness are partner or spousal abuse, insecure or low incomes and mental health issues. Regarding the latter, the most frequent mental health diagnoses for women are anxiety disorders, followed by mood disorders. For those who may be using drugs, they would be encouraged to use them in the safety of a space that is under observation and they would be permitted to use in the privacy of their homes.

Will there be a site for (medically) supervised drug consumption within the facility?

See above.

What will the facility plan be to prohibit drug use outside of the facility (especially on the community centre and school sites)?

Residents would be required to sign a program agreement with the operator which would include the resident agreeing to not use drugs outside the building, and the operator would regularly monitor and enforce this agreement with consequences for non-compliance.

Will there be any requirement for residents to participate in local or off-site programs or meetings as a condition of residency? (i.e.: must residents be actively involved in their residency/increased well-being, based on their tier level/needs)?

Yes, residents would participate in ongoing case management and would be required to meet a minimum of once monthly with staff to review their residency and ongoing personal goals. Their case plan identifies services in the city that can support their needs and on-site supports would also be available.

What percentage of residents will be classified as having high-risk mental health behaviours (such as safety risks to themselves or others)?

There is limited research regarding women who are homeless. However, for women in general, the most frequent mental health diagnoses are anxiety disorders, followed by mood disorders.

Elizabeth Fry, the operator, can draw upon its own data. It is understood that the proposed modular housing project is targeted to women who are homeless (or at risk of homelessness) who would benefit from staffing support to remain housed. Elizabeth Fry operates a program targeted for similar homeless women with the additional proviso that they have been homeless for a minimum of six of the past twelve months for more than three times in the past twelve months. In that instance, Elizabeth Fry places women in private market housing and provides a year of support, inclusive of on-call care response. In the 2016 Annual Report (available on the society's website), of those women who met the eligibility criteria for the Housing First Program (A Key of Her Own), "mental health and addiction related issues reflect only a third of those served."

Within Elizabeth Fry, Gurney Place Women's Shelter, which is located at 402 East Columbia Street in New Westminster, has never had a drug overdose, suicide, or violent event occur within the past ten years. In all of its shelters, the society has had three events in the past ten years; one where a woman was assessed as a risk to herself and two for overdoses.

Within *A Key of Her Own*, of those individuals served in the program's duration (nearly four years), no women has been evicted due to drug use or violence.

While the number of individuals served in a year is significantly greater than it would be in the proposed modular housing project, there is significant consistency in the management of staff and clients through its policies and procedures and the society would anticipate similar outcomes.

9. If there are high-risk residents present, what additional measures will be in place to ensure safety for building residents, adjacent schools and community?

BC Housing works closely with their non-profit operators to create safe and responsible housing. It starts with a thorough and thoughtful resident selection process involving BC Housing, the operator, Fraser Health and others who may have a background on prospective residents. Each person is assessed to determine their needs and to create a healthy mix within the building and community. Each person would have different needs, for example, anxiety, depression, diabetes, trauma, etc.

Elizabeth Fry, the operator, would work with BC Housing and local service providers to ensure that the needs of potential residents are well matched to the types of support services which are available in the proposed modular housing project. Potential residents, which would be women aged 19-plus, would be assessed as to their ability to live in supportive housing and would receive individualized case planning to further develop life and social skills such as employment planning and managing the transition to independence. They would also be able to access 'in-reach services and be referred to community services and support groups, as well as being subject to wellness checks. The housing would be staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week and there would be a 24 hour phone number for emergencies. As mentioned previously, residents would be required to sign a program agreement with the provider to ensure that they understand the importance of being a good neighbour.

It is unclear as to what is meant by the term “high risk residents;” however, Elizabeth Fry’s understanding of women who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness is that they have a high need for supports related to their personal circumstances.

In general, Elizabeth Fry’s understanding of risk is that risk increases when needs are not met. The proposed modular housing project is designed to meet needs and includes opportunities for ongoing daily interaction with residents through meals and staff presence, as well as the support of society policies, procedures and tools (e.g., Health and Safety Hazard Assessment) which are used to measure, respond and mitigate risk. If a resident was assessed to present a risk to the safety of others whether in the building or the community which would include schools, the individual would be assessed as unfit to live within a group living site. That assessment would trigger an immediate case review with the supervisor or on-call designate and a responsive plan would be put in place depending on the circumstances. If a woman is assessed as a risk to herself, the society would call for a definitive psychiatric assessment through medical personnel; or if similarly a risk to others, assessment by qualified police personnel.

10. The VAT levels of selected residents will be important here. “What VAT levels will be considered for individuals when evaluating potential residents for this site?”

The proposed modular housing project would focus on assessing each resident’s needs to determine the services and supports they would require to remain successfully housed, and to perhaps move on to more independent housing. Assessments focus on current needs and behaviours and include referrals to health and engaging in programs.

There is no threshold for acceptance into the proposed modular housing project other than a women aged 19-plus who is homeless or at-risk of homelessness. At the time of entry into the proposed project, a case planning and resident needs assessment would be completed. This would allow Elizabeth Fry to measure change over time in residents so that change could be recognized and the effectiveness of services and supports offered could be reviewed periodically for ongoing improvement on a systemic overall level.

11. At the time of the Open House, Elizabeth Fry representatives expressed frustration that Fraser Health had not signed on to be involved in this project, given how critical medical services and health authority involvement is in these project how will they be brought on board? If they do not sign on how will the Province, City and Elizabeth Fry address this shortfall?

Shawn Bayes, Executive Director, found no staff person that made this statement.

BC Housing reached out to Fraser Health’s Addictions and Mental Health Division and a joint discussion took place with them about what resources they could bring to the proposed modular housing project. Elizabeth Fry also reached out to, a different branch of Fraser Health, Home and Community Care Services, who provide home health care services. Elizabeth Fry would value some on-site counseling and support for the prevalence of mortality (e.g., high blood pressure, heart, kidney or liver disease) and medical treatment (e.g., arthritis, asthma, cancer, medication management and pregnancy) issues for residents.

Multiple Elizabeth Fry programs support women with medical needs. The society addresses those needs through case management planning which identifies what health needs that a woman has and how she would address them through community resources. The society also has relationships

with walk-in medical clinics who are aware of and informed about the needs of clients and the services it provides. In instances where the society could benefit from medical information or support such as how to identify organic cognitive impairments, brain disease processes, and medication or drug use impairment in individuals to be able to plan appropriate case management, the society has a contractual arrangement with a private contractor who is an emergency room discharge nurse in a busy Vancouver hospital who assists with information, training, referral, and case management planning as needed to support clients. Lastly, Elizabeth Fry has two psychologists on staff who assist with case consultation and planning related to developing plans to support client needs.

12. Will these residents be paying rent, and if so how much? What would cause a resident to be “evicted” or terminated from participation in the program?

Yes, residents pay rent of \$375 a month. Eviction due to failure to pay rental income would not occur. Rent payment and repayment plans are a part of the services offered. There are mechanisms in place through the Ministry of Social Development to provide for direct payment to the society. Termination of residency could occur in the event that the women refused to comply with the program structure. This policy is in all programs and is virtually never used. Staff are trained to engage women in active participation.

Community Impact

13. What organization/stakeholder will be providing needle collection/drug paraphernalia sweeps of the school and QCC grounds?

How often will these sweeps take place?

Elizabeth Fry Society staff would conduct property checks at shift changes, which would be a minimum of twice daily.

14. Does the City/Elizabeth Fry expect the School District to have any responsibilities regarding sweeps or student protection? If so, have these expectations been communicated with the school principals?

To date, over 300 residents have been involved in consultation activities and events, including consultation and information sharing with the School District, and the Principals and parents of Queen Elizabeth Elementary School and Queensborough Middle School. City staff and a representative from BC Housing provided a presentation to the Queen Elizabeth Elementary School Parent Advisory Council (PAC) on April 11, 2018 and to the Queensborough Middle School PAC on May 16, 2018. Both meetings were attended by the school Principals and the Vice-Principal of Queensborough Middle School was in attendance at the May 16 PAC meeting. Elizabeth Fry representatives were also available to answer questions at the May 16 PAC meeting. A letter addressed to parents with information about the proposed modular housing project, date, time and location of the neighbourhood open house, and contact information, was sent to the Principals of both schools for circulation to the parents of the student body. A Community Advisory Committee would be established for the purpose of facilitating communication and feedback. This committee could include representation from BC Housing, the City, Elizabeth Fry, the Queensborough Residents for Responsible Community Planning Group, the Residents’ Association, the two Parent Advisory Councils, the Special Programs Committee and other interested stakeholders.

15. What are the risks associated with housing projects such as these? How will these be mitigated? If there are no inherent risks associated with this kind of project why will there be 24/7 supervision (2) and on call supervisors on the weekend?

The proposed modular housing project with support services follows an established operating model for supportive housing projects, which includes 24/7 staffing and supervision. Supportive housing is affordable housing that also provides access to support staff and programming to help residents stabilize their lives, enhance their independent living skills, and reconnect with their communities. In the proposed project, Elizabeth Fry, the operator, would work with BC Housing and local service providers to ensure that the needs of potential residents are well matched to the types of support services which are available in the proposed project. The City has been working with BC Housing and Elizabeth Fry to address concerns that have been raised. The following measures, plus others, would be taken to address cited safety concerns and mitigate risk:

- Establishing a Community Advisory Committee.
- Ensuring 24/7 staffing, which would entail a minimum of two staff at all times, with the support of a supervisor on weekdays and an on-call supervisor at all times.
- Ensuring that staff have appropriate training and skills to support residents, including crisis intervention and trauma informed counselling.
- Instituting a resident selection process, including assessment procedures.
- Requiring program agreements which would address expectations regarding appropriate behaviour related to health and safety.
- Instituting a visitor policy, particularly related to overnight guests – e.g., advance planning and preapproval.
- Partnering with Fraser Health related to ‘in-reach’ support services.
- Undertaking individualized care planning for residents to ensure their needs are being adequately addressed.
- Building a privacy fence to better delineate the proposed project from the park.
- Incorporating private outdoor area for residents, including a contained amenity space for smoking.
- Conducting property checks at shift changes, which would be a minimum of twice daily.

Re: Two on call supervisors:

Elizabeth Fry operates around the clock and at any given time it has 15 to 20 staff working in residential settings. If the society only provided supervisors during weekday business hours (five shifts a week), it would have 16 shifts without access (it takes 21 shifts - three per day, seven days a week - to cover a 24/7 schedule). Elizabeth Fry has held this practice for over 40 years. Because of the size of the society and number of staff, it has two supervisors on call. Programs are organized into two groups and paired to one of the on-call supervisors to provide reasonable spans of supervisor per person. In the event that a supervisor is for some reason is unavailable, staff are welcome to use the alternate.

The proposed modular housing project has access to this network of support as a part of the society’s service provision.

Community Policing

16. Will there be an increase in policing to reflect the risks to the community that are associated with this site?

In general, there would not be an increase to the overall strength of the Police Department; however the Department is constantly evaluating the high priority areas of the city, and dispatches or assigns its members to those areas accordingly. Initial information and experience shows that a development and/or housing that has 24/7 staffing and support services in place does not add or generate any significant calls for service. (Dave Jones, Chief of Police)

There are no known risks associated with this proposed modular housing project so the question on increased risks to the community is difficult to answer. (Dave Jones, Chief of Police)

17. Will there be staffed policing in Queensborough to support this site?

The Queensborough area would be staffed and patrolled according to the ongoing assessment of the overall city and the public safety needs. In general, the Department would not have staff dedicated directly to this site; however, it does have excellent and robust programs for women who are victims of domestic violence and an equally effective Mental Health Officer Liaison Program. While the Department does not foresee that the residents of the proposed modular housing project would cause a drain, or spike, in needed services, it is always prepared to provide a service response to any new program or development in the city. (Dave Jones, Chief of Police)

18. Has police, ambulance, fire etc. response times for Queensborough been assessed and deemed appropriate?

The Department is confident through both its experience and ongoing assessment with partner agencies, such as ECOMM, that it could provide excellent response times to not only the Queensborough area but all areas of the city. (Dave Jones, Chief of Police)

For all calls, the timing includes

- from the actual time the call is received by the call taker;
- sent to a dispatcher;
- dispatched to a member; and
- member has arrived on scene.

Average for priority one calls (most urgent)

- Downtown 7 minutes
- East End (Sapperton) 9 minutes
- Mid and Uptown 11 minutes
- Queensborough 12 minutes
- West End 12 minutes

The majority of the time involved in most calls is the time it takes to receive the information at the call taker level, and then dispatch the call. The members arrival times from time of dispatch to arriving is much less (usually) for all zones.

Stakeholders

19. What will the City responsibilities be for this site?

The City would retain ownership of the land and enter into a lease agreement with BC Housing. The lease agreement would set out terms for BC Housing's use of the site, and the obligations of both the City and BC Housing. The lease agreement could also contain terms regarding tenancies, accountability, reporting requirements, among others. BC Housing would supply the modular housing units and be responsible for all site development costs, including ongoing maintenance and decommissioning after use. The City would be responsible for providing services to the site, and maintaining the lands adjacent to the site.

General Services

20. Will the City and Province commit to providing accessible mental health services for both men and women within Queensborough directly?

What efforts will the City and Province make towards encouraging the attraction of medical services to Queensborough?

Are there plans to provide medical services to support this site, not only for the 838 Ewan residents but also the community?

Discussions have taken place with Fraser Health; however, the focus of the discussions are related to supporting the residents of the proposed modular housing project at 838 Ewen Avenue. The questions being raised are much larger and pertain to funding and resource allocation decisions on behalf of the Provincial Government and in the case of General Practitioners, decisions made by private practitioners. The City is encouraging further commercial development along Ewen Avenue which could provide opportunities for future community and health services. The City, with the assistance of its two Members of Legislative Assembly, could advocate for additional health services, including mental health and addiction services, for Queensborough.

Transportation

21. Will the City commit to working with TransLink to ensure that there are improved bus services to Queensborough, not only for 838 Ewan residents but also the community and high school students?

The proposed modular housing project would provide housing for 44 women age 19-plus. A small increase in the number of residents, such as is the case here, would likely not be sufficient for a service review by TransLink. However, staff have identified the potential for a meeting with the Queensborough Residents for Responsible Community Planning (QRRCP) Group to discuss other issues, some of them unrelated to the proposed housing project for 838 Ewen Avenue, which have arisen during the consultation process. For example, demand for child care, enrollment pressures on schools, issues related to parking and transportation, difficulties accessing health services, limited police presence, etc. The meeting would include City staff from different Departments to explore the concerns and to share information.

Child Safety

22. Will there be orientation with both schools (children, parents and staff) regarding personal safety (i.e.: drug, stranger, etc....)?

This would likely be a decision of the two Principals, likely in consultation with the School District. Elizabeth Fry would be receptive to meeting with staff and parents to discuss the measures in place in order to address safety concerns and to mitigate risks; to share contact information and to further develop relations; and to provide information, if necessary, to students to address any concerns that they may have regarding the building and its residents.

Miscellaneous

23. Will there be publicly available research/data collection regarding various markers for the housing initiative?

Through the establishment of a Community Advisory Committee, there would be a mechanism to share information. There would need to be more specificity as to what information is being requested to be tracked. Some information would be protected related to residents.

24. Statistics regarding distance and time travelled for participants to access the services required by residents that are not provided directly within Queensborough

This would be difficult to track as there are 44 residents and depending on their needs, they would be accessing different services and for different periods of time. As their needs change, their service needs would also change.