



Community Engagement Report

Temporary Housing with Supports

397 3rd Avenue, Prince George, BC

April 2, 2024

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Purpose of the Report

This report provides a summary of the engagement conducted by BC Housing in partnership with the City of Prince George for the proposed temporary supportive housing development at 397 3rd Avenue, Prince George, B.C. This report includes an overview of:

- the public engagement rollout;
- opportunities for the public to participate;
- feedback received during the engagement.

About the Project

BC Housing and the City of Prince George are planning to build approximately 43 temporary supportive homes at 397 3rd Avenue. These homes will provide much-needed shelter for people experiencing homelessness in the community.

The Province's new HEARTH program is funding this project. The Province and the City of Prince George have signed a Memorandum of Understanding formalizing their commitment to work together to better support people who are unhoused in the community.

The proposal is to build the temporary homes on the City-owned site at 397 3rd Avenue (bordered by London Street, 3rd Avenue and 4th Avenue). An application has been submitted for an initial three-year Temporary Use Permit for this site.

Modular construction will be used for these homes—similar to what is used in logging or mining camps. Each unit is a private room. There will also be shared washrooms, laundry and kitchen facilities, and an amenity space. These homes are scheduled to open in fall 2024.

Notifications & Outreach

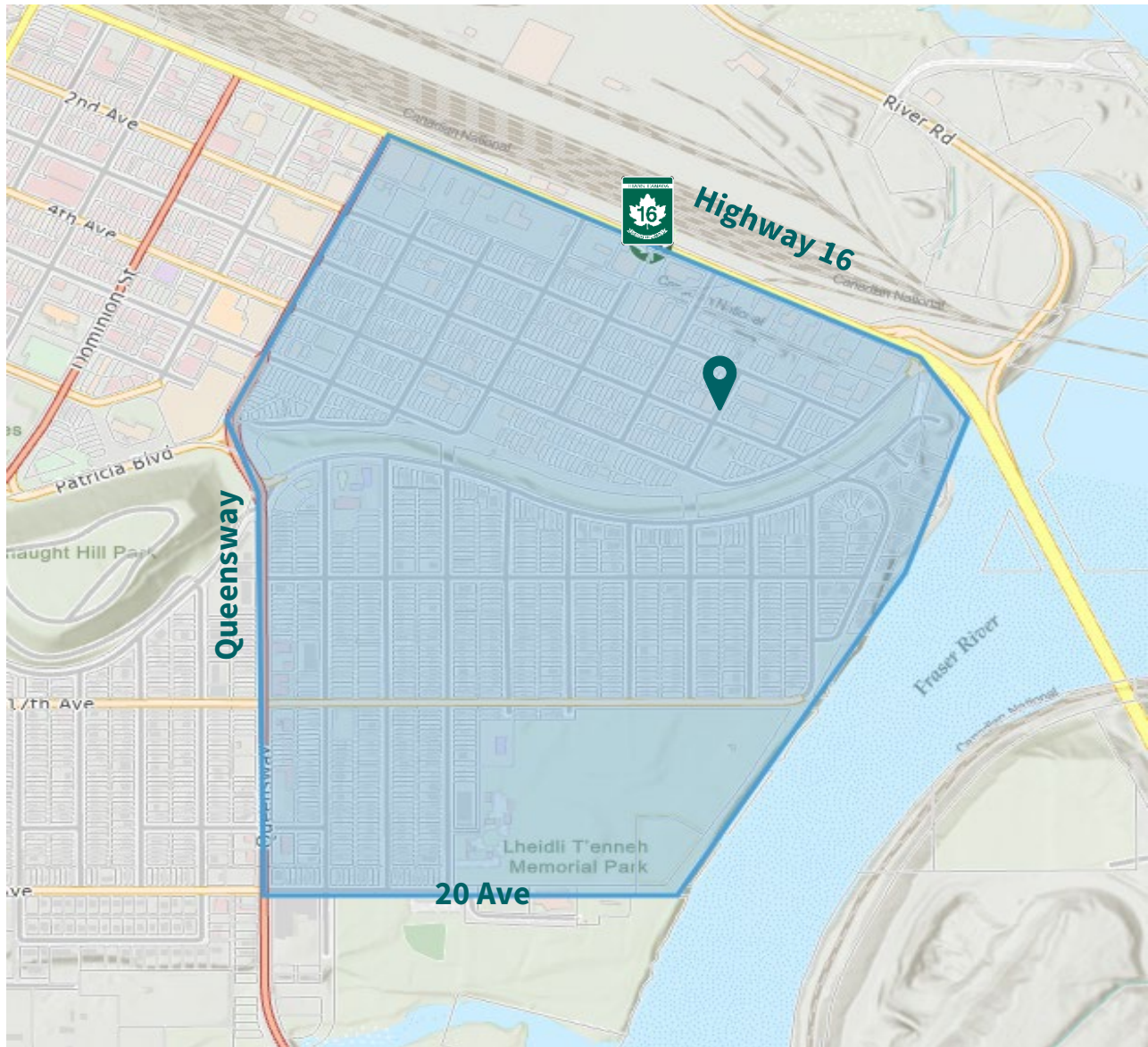
A communications and engagement plan was developed to support informing the public about the project and share opportunities for community engagement.

Announcement

The Province of B.C. made a public announcement about the proposed project in January 2024 (**Appendix A**). The news release was posted to the BC Housing website and the Government of BC website.

Neighbourhood Letters

On February 16, 2024, BC Housing sent a neighbourhood letter (**Appendix B**) to approximately 1,000 residences and businesses located around the proposed site within the shaded area in the map below.



The letter included the following:

- A short summary of the proposed development at 397 3rd Avenue
- Information about the broader MOU between BC Housing and the City of Prince George
- An overview of the development
- A description of the services provided in supportive housing
- An invitation to participate in an online community information session (an additional session was scheduled later due to high community interest)

- A link to the Let's Talk Housing BC project webpage
- BC Housing's community relations email address for questions or comments

Let's Talk Housing BC Webpage

The community was invited to visit the Let's Talk Housing BC project webpage for more information about the project and learn about engagement opportunities. This webpage launched on February 27, 2024, at letstalkhousingbc.ca/prince-george-397-3rd-ave (**Appendix C**).

The webpage includes the following:

- Project details, including the development process, as well as supports and services at the site
- Details of the online community information session and link for registration
- BC Housing's community relations email address

On March 14, 2024 (two days after the first online community information session), a video recording of the presentation was uploaded onto the webpage. A preliminary site plan was also available for download.

As of March 24, 2024 (5 days after the second online community information session), the Let's Talk Housing page has had **699 visits**. The preliminary site plan was downloaded 17 times, and the video recording was viewed 11 times.

Online Community Information Sessions

Throughout the process, BC Housing and the City of Prince George ensured that community members had the opportunity to contact the project team by email or by attending one of two community online information sessions. A second online community information session was announced to accommodate additional community interest after the initial session reached capacity.

The purpose of the sessions was to:

1. Share information with the community and key stakeholders about the project and how it will support people in the community experiencing homelessness
2. Facilitate dialogue and understanding by answering questions and receiving feedback from the community about this project

Online Community Information Session #1 - March 12, 2024

BC Housing hosted the first online session on March 12, 2024. This session was originally designed to welcome up to 30 participants. The capacity was then raised to 50 once the registration was filled. In total, there were **36 participants** in this session.

An Elder from the Lheidli T'enneh provided a welcome. Representatives from BC Housing and the City of Prince George gave a 30-minute presentation about the proposed project (**Appendix D**) and provided details about the building, timeline, operations and residents as well as municipal plans and process. This was followed by a moderated Q&A during which representatives from BC Housing and the City of Prince George answered questions from the participants about the project.

Online Community Information Session #2 - March 19, 2024

BC Housing hosted the second session on March 19, 2024. There were **15 participants** in this session. It followed the same format as the first session. An Elder from the Lheidli T'enneh provided a welcome. Representatives from BC Housing and the City of Prince George presented using an updated slide deck (changes noted in Appendix D). This was also followed by a moderated Q&A during which representatives from BC Housing and the City of Prince George answered questions from the participants about the project.

What We Heard: Key Themes

Many questions were raised and responded to during the moderated Q&A portion of the online sessions. BC Housing also responded to comments and questions directed to the monitored email inbox at **communityrelations@bchousing.org**. The significant participation of the community is sincerely recognized and valued.

Several consistent themes emerged from the questions, including:

- Safety and security
- Operations and support services
- Building design
- Municipal process
- The court protected encampment nearby

Safety and security

Many participants, particularly those living in the Millar Addition neighbourhood, asked questions about safety and security, including:

- the proposed security features of the site
- an increase in criminal activity in the area as a result of this project
- Whether firearms will be authorized in the housing

Presenters responded that the site will have a full fence with controlled access to the parking area and pedestrian entrances. Cameras and lighting will be strategically placed for security purposes.

There will also be a minimum of three staff members on site 24/7. These staff will be experienced in supporting vulnerable populations and have established relationships with local people experiencing homelessness. Their focus will be on aiding those in need, and weapons are banned in the buildings.

Operations and support services

Some of the questions were on the theme of the operations of the site and the support services that will be offered to the residents, including:

- The number of staff members that will be on site to manage the building and provide services to its residents

- The rules and risk of eviction

Presenters responded that there will also be a minimum of three staff members on site 24/7. Staff members will be provided by the operator and funded by BC Housing.

Tenancies will fall under the Residential Tenancy Act (RTA). It is important to note that supportive housing units such as these will be exempt from sections of the RTA that prohibit guest policies and wellness checks. Evictions are not taken lightly in supportive housing. When needed, additional resources and supports are provided to each resident to ensure a successful tenancy and prevent the need for eviction. If eviction becomes necessary, BC Housing will seek other appropriate accommodation and not return a person to homelessness.

Building design

Some participants asked questions relating to building design, including:

- Whether the proposed building is on a flood zone
- Whether the trailers used will be up to BC Building Code

Presenters confirmed that the site is on a floodplain, and that the trailers will be elevated to the recommended elevation to meet the floodplain requirements as per geotechnical assessments.

BC Housing has recently completed a code review for the architect's plans, and adjustments are underway to ensure the units are in compliance. Additionally, they are implementing life safety upgrades, such as a sprinkler system and security cameras, to meet Building Code requirements.

Municipal process

Many community members asked questions relating to the municipal process for the temporary use permit (TUP) application for the project, including:

- The term of the TUP and likelihood of an extension
- How community members can be involved in the process

Presenters shared that the current TUP application is for a three-year term. The TUP application is being processed and will include the feedback collected through the community engagement sessions for consideration in the decision making process.

A TUP includes a legislated public notification period 10 days prior to the Council meeting the application will be considered. These engagement sessions are in addition to the required notification period.

During the public notification period, residents can provide written submissions related to the proposed TUP application. These submissions will be provided to Council for their consideration of the TUP application.

The council meeting will be open to the public, but there will not be a public hearing specifically for the permit (community members will not be able to speak directly to the council).

People can also sign up for City news and notices at princegeorge.ca/subscribe.

BC Housing has no long-term plan for the site. Once the initial permit expires, the applicant can choose to discontinue the use, apply for an extension for another three years, or explore relocation options. These steps fall under the *Local Government Act's* guidelines for the term and renewal of a permit.

The court-protected encampment nearby

Many participants, particularly those from the Millar Addition neighbourhood, asked questions relating to the court-protected encampment near the site on Lower Patricia Boulevard, including:

- When/whether the encampment will be closed
- Why it has taken so long to develop this (temporary) solution

Presenters shared that the encampment is currently protected by a court order. BC Housing is actively developing several facilities across the housing spectrum to address the needs of the community. The proposed transitional housing project is meant to provide stability and support to unhoused people in their transition into supportive and independent housing, which is the ultimate goal.

The emergence of encampments is an urgent matter across the province. Provincial initiatives like the HEARTH program were established just last year to take a more comprehensive approach to support unhoused people.

The process of development can also be lengthy. Development traditionally takes years to initiate, but BC Housing is committed to expediting the process for permanent supportive housing. BC Housing is now actively pursuing permanent housing solutions with 50 purpose-built supportive units already planned for 1st Avenue, and an additional 150 units of supportive housing in the works.

Conclusion

BC Housing, in collaboration with the City of Prince George, provided opportunities for the community to learn more, ask questions, and provide comments and feedback about the proposed temporary supportive homes to be developed at 397 3rd Avenue. We are confident that the mechanisms to reach the public were sufficiently broad and our engagement has been fulsome.

Appendix A: Announcement

June 16, 2023

New supports coming for people experiencing homelessness in Prince George

PRINCE GEORGE - The Province and the City of Prince George have signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) that formalizes their commitment to work together to better support people who are unhoused and sheltering in encampments and to help prevent encampments.

“Our government is committed to working with the City of Prince George to provide people with better supports and a safe place to live in a way that will improve everyone’s quality of life in the city,” said Premier David Eby. “Today’s agreement formalizes this commitment to work together to help people sheltering outdoors move inside, and ultimately into safe, stable, supportive homes.”

The MOU clarifies the roles and responsibilities of the Province and city to prioritize the health and safety of people sheltering outdoors and to bring them inside. This includes the Province partnering with Prince George to implement the new Homeless Encampment Action Response Teams (HEART) and Homeless Encampment Action Response Temporary Housing (HEARTH) programs. These new initiatives will support people in encampments on the path to stable housing.

“Through the Belonging in BC homelessness plan, we’re creating new tools that will deliver the much-needed supports and housing to prevent encampments over the long term,” said Ravi Kahlon, Minister of Housing. “We’re proud to work with the City of Prince George and Indigenous partners to deliver housing for the people who need it most. This is one of the many steps our government is taking to break the cycle of homelessness, and I am excited to see it move forward.”

HEART is a new multidisciplinary regional program designed to rapidly respond to encampments to better support people sheltering outdoors to move inside. The program will bring together the provincial and local governments, Indigenous and First Nations partners, Northern Health and non-profit organizations to quickly assess the needs of people sheltering in encampments and provide rapid access to the supports and services they need to exit homelessness. Health, sanitation, income, harm reduction, fire safety, and social and cultural supports will all be provided through the program.

In addition, the HEARTH program will provide emergency housing, shelter options and immediate coordinated supports to assist people in encampments or sheltering in public spaces to come inside and access temporary or permanent housing options that fit their needs.

The Province and BC Housing will lead the creation of the HEART and HEARTH programs in Prince George. Implementation of HEART is planned to begin in fall 2023, while HEARTH will begin operating in spring 2024. The city will suggest available land and expedite rezoning and permitting approvals for new shelter and supportive housing projects that will be identified as part of the encampment response plan.

“I am pleased the city will be working to support the Province in its work to address priorities related to housing, health and public safety,” said Simon Yu, mayor, Prince George. “We expect this coordinated approach will address the immediate and long-term needs of our most vulnerable citizens who have been living in crisis for far too long.”

The MOU also outlines provincial and municipal commitments to help prevent and respond to future encampments in Prince George. This includes:

- a cross-ministry and coordinated response to homeless encampments on crown and other lands through the rapid provision of outreach and increased access to supports;
- exploration of the potential use of municipal levers, such as tax exemptions, zoning and bylaws, to expedite social housing units and affordable housing in alignment with BC Housing’s funding programs and the community’s housing needs; and
- engagement with First Nations and Indigenous organizations to develop and facilitate access to culturally safe and supportive practices for Indigenous people sheltering in encampments.

Both the HEART and HEARTH programs are part of Belonging in BC, the Province’s plan to prevent and reduce homelessness. The plan will also add 3,900 new supportive housing units and 240 complex-care spaces provincewide.

Learn More:

To read the MOU, visit: https://news.gov.bc.ca/files/BC_Encampment_MOU_June_14_2023.pdf

To read the Belonging in BC plan, visit: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/files/BelongingStrategy.pdf>

To learn more about HEART and HEARTH, visit: <https://www.bchousing.org/housing-assistance/homelessness-services/HEART-HEARTH>

Appendix B: Neighbourhood Letter – February 2024

February 26, 2024

Neighbourhood Update

Supportive Housing proposal for 397 3rd Avenue

Dear Neighbour,

We are writing to share that BC Housing and the City of Prince George are planning to build approximately 43 temporary supportive homes at 397 3rd Avenue. These homes will provide much-needed shelter for people experiencing homelessness in the community.

This project is funded by the Province's Homeless Encampment Action Response Temporary Housing (HEARTH) program. The Province and the City of Prince George have signed a Memorandum of Understanding formalizing their commitment to work together to better support people who are unhoused and address and prevent encampments in the community.

Development

We are proposing to build the temporary homes on the City-owned site at 397 3rd Avenue (bordered by London Street, 3rd Avenue and 4th Avenue). We have applied for an initial 3-year Temporary Use Permit for this site.

We will be using modular construction for these homes – similar to what is used in logging or mining camps. Each unit is a private room. There would be shared washroom, laundry and kitchen facilities as well as a 3-unit amenity space.

We are currently planning to open these homes in Fall 2024.

Services & Support

BC Housing will select a non-profit housing operator through a fair and open process to manage these homes and provide services to the residents.

BC Housing and the non-profit operator will assess potential residents and offer the homes to people based on their individual needs and supports available. This process will also ensure a balanced mix of residents.

The site will be staffed 24/7 by a qualified operator. Support services will help residents take the next steps towards success in their housing journeys. These can include:

- Health care referrals and wellness checks
- Outreach, life skills training, employment assistance

- Connection and referral to community services or support groups

Community Engagement

A caring community can contribute greatly to the success of supportive housing residents. BC Housing is committed to being a good neighbour and keeping lines of communication open.

We are inviting interested neighbours to join us for an online community information session to learn more about the proposal and ask questions.

Online Community Information Session

Date: Tuesday, March 12, 2024

Time: 6:30 pm – 8:00 pm

Where: Zoom (link provided after registration)

Please RSVP by visiting letstalkhousingbc.ca/prince-george-397-3rd-ave or scanning the code below.



If you have any questions, please email communityrelations@bchousing.org.

Appendix C: Let's Talk Housing BC Webpage

Prince George – 397 3rd Avenue



BC Housing and the City of Prince George are planning to build approximately 43 temporary supportive homes at 397 3rd Avenue. These homes will provide much-needed shelter for people experiencing homelessness in the community.

This project is funded by the Province's [HEARTH](#) program. The Province and the City of Prince George have signed a [Memorandum of Understanding](#) formalizing their commitment to work together to better support people who are unhoused and address and prevent encampments in the community.

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Date: Tuesday, March 12, 2024

Time: 6:30 pm – 8:00 pm

Where: Zoom (link provided after registration)

Register: [Prince-George-397-3rd-Ave.eventbrite.ca](https://prince-george-397-3rd-ave.eventbrite.ca)

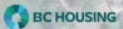

We welcome questions and comments at any time by email to communityrelations@bchousing.org.

Appendix D: Slideshow Presentation

Community Information Session

**397 3rd Avenue, Prince George
Temporary Supportive Housing**

Tuesday, March 19, 2024
6:30 pm – 8:00 pm



** This is an updated version of the slide, used in the second session on March 19, 2024. The slide used in the first session identified March 12, 2024 as the date of the presentation.*

Land acknowledgment

We acknowledge, with gratitude, that the area we are discussing today is situated on the unceded traditional territory of the Lheidli T'enneh.



Introductions

BC HOUSING

- **Kirsten Baillie** (she, her) – Senior Manager of Development
- **Andressa Thompson** (she, her) – Non Profit Portfolio Manager

CITY OF PRINCE GEORGE

- **Deanna Wasnik** (she, her) – Director, Planning & Development
- **Kali Holahan** (she, her) – Supervisor of Land Use Planning, Planning & Development

* This is an updated version of the slide, used in the second session on March 19. The slide used in the first session on March 12 also introduced Ruby Chow (she, her) as Development Manager on the BC Housing team.

For our time together

We commit to:

- Come together in the spirit of community
- Share information openly and transparently
- Balance time for sharing information and answering questions



We ask that all participants:

- Use respectful, people-first language
- Ask brief, genuine questions and allow space for answers
- Consider there may be people experiencing homelessness present



Meeting details

Mute and chat functions

- All participants will be muted/unmuted by the facilitator
- Chat messages will only appear to the facilitator

Q&A

- Q&A time after the presentation
- Type questions into the Zoom Q&A
- The presentation part of the session is being recorded, but the Q&A part will not be recorded



Technical support

Contacts

- 604-803-6584 (Meeting host)
- communityrelations@bchousing.org

Connect by phone

- +1 780 666 0144 (Zoom audio)
- Meeting ID number: 648 6790 6886



Topics for today

- Housing & Homelessness in Prince George
- 397 3rd Avenue Project
- What is Supportive Housing?
- Q&A



Homelessness in Prince George

- **163 people** were identified as experiencing homelessness in Prince George (Point in Time count 2021)
- **10** respondents were **over the age of 60**.
- **91%** report having been in Prince George **more than a year**; **26%** report having **always been here**.
- The number is probably even higher now in 2024. Social service providers report **more people at risk** and **increased wait lists**.



Photo: Global News

The Housing Ecosystem



BC Housing in Prince George

Recently Completed



Quebec Street House – 36 Units
Affordable Rental Housing



Amber House – 17 Units
Women's Transition Housing



1919 17th Ave Phase III – 35 Units
Supportive Housing

Selected Projects In Development



North Star Inn – 96 Units
Supportive Housing



1919 17th Ave Phase II – 57 Units
Affordable Rental Housing

BC Housing projects in Prince George range from supportive housing to affordable housing, serving local people with varying income levels and needs.

397 3rd Avenue, Prince George



BC Housing – City of Prince George Partnership

- The Province and the City of Prince George have signed a **Memorandum of Understanding** committing to work together to better support people who are unhoused.
- The City **identified 397 3rd Avenue** as a project site
- The City is **leasing the site** to BC Housing for a nominal fee
- The City is **providing site servicing**
- BC Housing is providing **capital** and **ongoing operating funding** under the Province's new HEARTH program

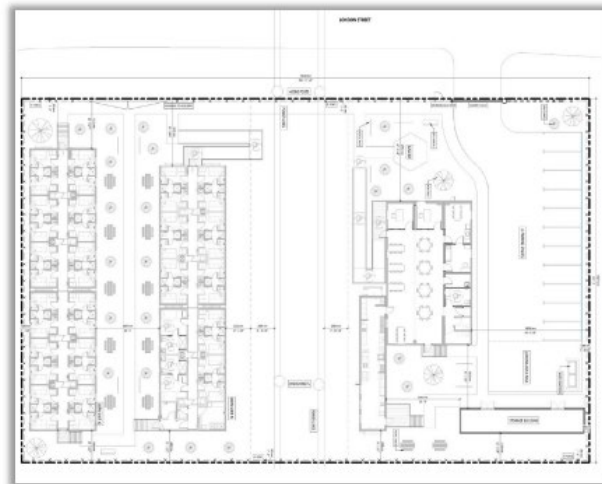


Temporary Supportive Housing

- This site would provide up to **43 new temporary supportive homes**, plus shared facilities and amenity space.
- **Support services** will help residents take the next steps towards success in their housing journeys.
- This would be a major step forward in providing **more safe homes** for people experiencing homelessness in Prince George.

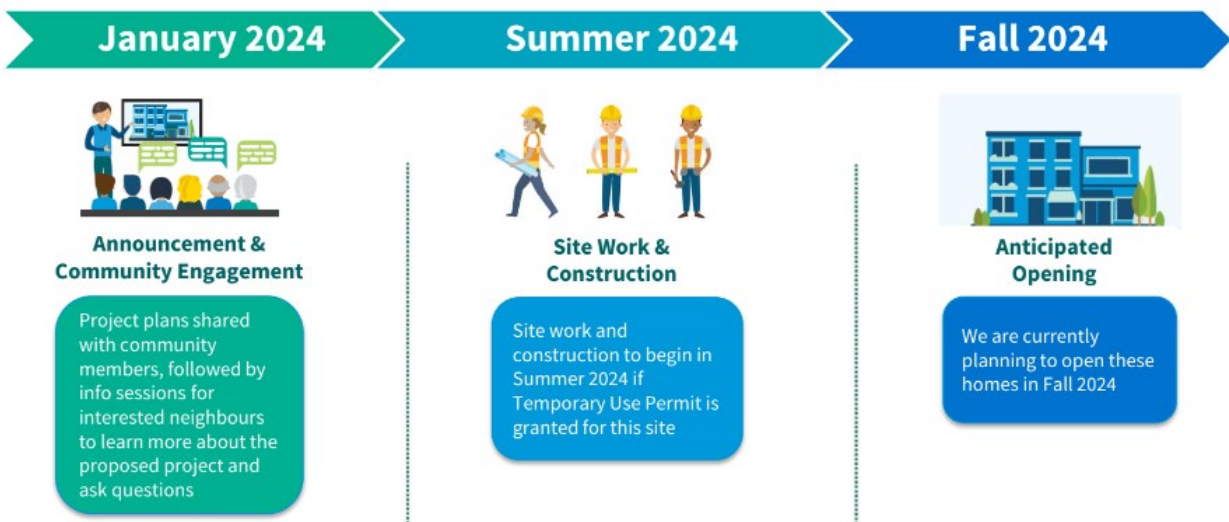


Preliminary Site Plan



* This is a new slide inserted after the first session on March 12.

Development Timeline

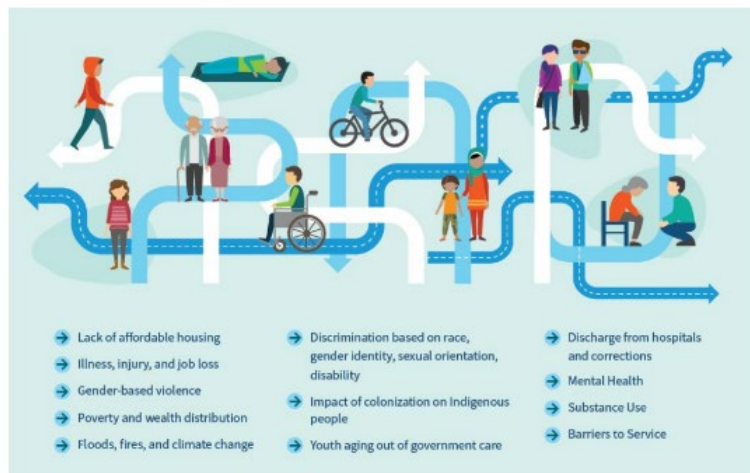


Land Use Application

- **Temporary Use Permits (TUPs)** allow a local government to consider the temporary use of land for a use that is not permitted by a zoning bylaw.
- Local governments are required to publish notice of consideration for a TUP. The City of Prince George will mail or otherwise deliver a **public notice to property owners and tenants within 30 meters** whose interests may be affected by a TUP.
- A TUP may be issued for a period of **up to 3 years**, with the opportunity to renew the permit once for up to an **additional 3 years subject to Council approval**.



Pathways to Homelessness



Housing First – Why Supportive Housing is important

Step 1: Offer people experiencing homelessness **safe, long-term housing**



Potential encampments

Housing First
Approach

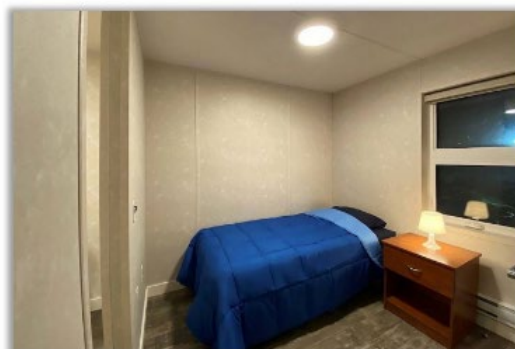
Step 2: Provide supports, services and guidance to **maintain housing** and **achieve other personal goals**



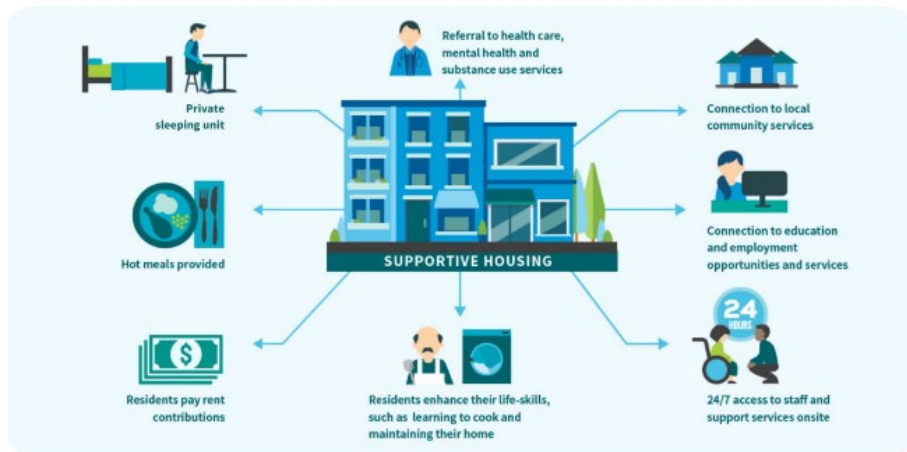
Supportive Housing

What is Supportive Housing?

- **Deeply affordable homes with on-site supports**
- For local people at risk of or experiencing homelessness
- Culturally informed support services and individual case planning



What services are typically available?



Residents

Who lives in supportive housing?

- Adults over the age of 19, including:
 - All genders
 - Seniors
 - People with disabilities
- Experiencing or at risk of homelessness
- In need of supports to maintain housing
- All residents pay rent and sign a program agreement around expectations and behaviours



Coordinated Access and Assessment



* This is an updated version of the slide, used in the second session on March 19. The slide used in the first session on March 12 had a description of the Coordinated Access and Assessment process in text instead of the graphic seen here.

Community & Resident Safety

The most important security feature for everyone is **staffing**:

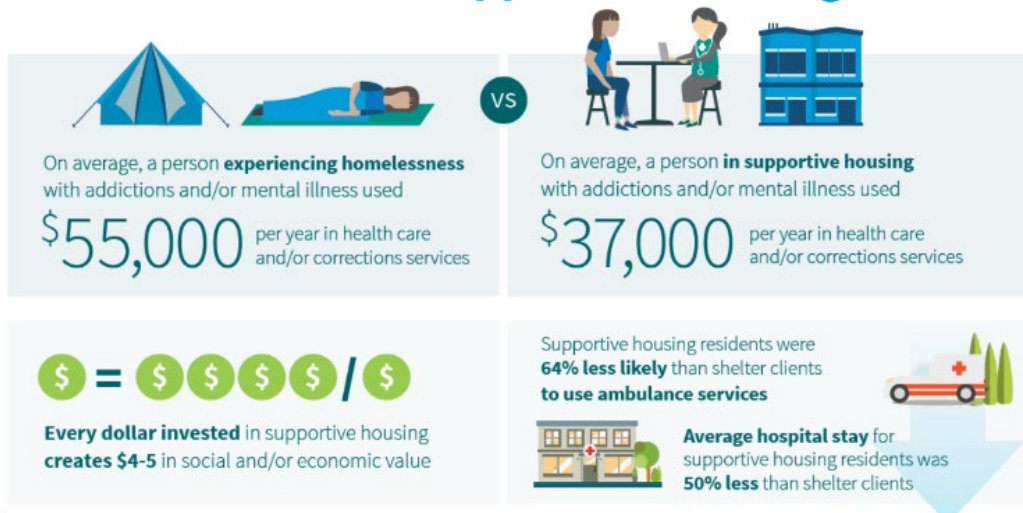
- Minimum of **three staff on site 24/7**
- **Who To Call | When To Call** info sheet with key contacts will be provided to neighbours and made available on BC Housing's Let's Talk webpage

Other features that contribute to community & resident safety include:

- Design features, such as **lighting, security cameras and perimeter fencing with controlled access**
- **Regular sweeps** of the property and the immediate area by staff and residents
- **Program agreement** signed by residents that addresses expectations about appropriate and respectful behaviour



Economic Benefits of Supportive Housing



Sources:
 Malatest & Associates Ltd. 2019. *Supportive Housing Outcome Evaluation*. BC Housing.
 Patterson et al. 2008. *Housing and Support for Adults with Severe Addictions and/or Mental Illness in British Columbia*. Centre for Applied Research in Mental Health and Addiction, Simon Fraser University

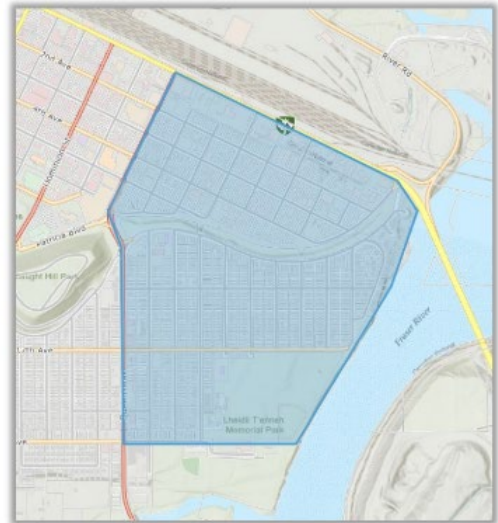
Community Engagement

What we've done:

- ✓ **Notification to neighbours** within the area shown on the right
- ✓ A new **Let's Talk webpage** for public information and feedback
- ✓ **2 online information sessions**
- ✓ **Ongoing support** for questions and comments via communityrelations@bchousing.org

What's to come:

- ✓ **Engagement summary report** to be uploaded onto the Let's Talk webpage



* This is a new slide inserted after the first session on March 12.

Questions

Please ask your questions in the Q&A function.

If we do not get to your question,
please email us at **communityrelations@bchousing.org**

To stay informed, please visit the project webpage:
letstalkhousingbc.ca/Prince-George-397-3rd-Ave