



INFORMATION SHEET

260 White Road Supportive Housing

OVERVIEW

BC Housing and the City of Duncan want to share with you more information about the new, safe and stable homes we are creating for residents of Cowichan Valley. Located at 260 White Road, this new building will provide up to 50 permanent, purpose-built studio apartments for people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

KEY FACTS

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Is this a City project?

No, this is a provincial BC Housing project (www.bchousing.org/).

Was the property on White Road owned by the City and sold by the City to BC Housing?

The City did not purchase the 260 White Road property and has not owned it at any time. BC Housing purchased the property from a private landowner and only recently identified the site for a supportive housing development.

Will this development include a shelter, or will a shelter be added later?

There will not be a shelter component to the project. As opposed to operating like a shelter on a first come first serve basis, the White Road supportive housing development will provide long-term rental units for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness who need support with varying health and personal challenges and needs. All residents of the White Road supportive housing development will go through an assessment, sign a program agreement, and pay rent. reconsider

APPROVAL PROCESS

Did the City know for months that White Road was being considered for this project?

No, the City has been meeting with BC Housing and the Municipality of North Cowichan about the need for supportive housing for the past year; however, the White Road property was NOT identified as an option during this time. BC Housing has a department that deals with land acquisition and they worked for over a year trying to find suitable properties for supportive housing in the City and in North Cowichan. The availability of land that is suitable to accommodate supportive housing development was very challenging. The City was informed by BC Housing about the location a few weeks prior BC Housing releasing the first press release on June 18th, 2020, announcing the two supportive housing developments on Drinkwater Road (North Cowichan) and White Road (Duncan).

Did the City withhold the location from the public about this project?

The City was not able to share information about the project until the official announcement was issued by BC Housing.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Why was there no public input? Or public hearing?

Given the urgent need for more housing with supports in Duncan, BC Housing and the City of Duncan and Municipality of North Cowichan agreed on an expedited process to ensure this housing is available months sooner. All parties have acknowledged that we are in the middle of a health emergency and we need to act quickly to provide people with their own private space in an effort to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

For this reason, BC Housing chose to enact 'paramountcy' to move forward as efficiently as possible to create new, healthy, safe, and stable homes for those who are vulnerable. The sooner people who are living on the streets can be housed, the safer the broader community is, as the chance of the virus spreading among a group of people who are sleeping in tents or congregating together is much higher compared to people who have their own space to self-isolate.

Because of the use of paramountcy, the site does not require a rezoning process or a public hearing. However, BC Housing wants to ensure all neighbours are informed about what is happening at the site, which is why BC Housing, in partnership with the City, are hosting multiple information sessions. These sessions will provide an opportunity for everyone to share their feedback, ask questions, and create an open dialogue – which we want to encourage.

The non-profit housing operator (selected by BC Housing) and partners will also be setting up a Community Advisory Committee (CAC) closer to the time when the building opens. This CAC will provide direct neighbours with an opportunity to continue to share their comments and concerns. The members on the CAC will work together to address all issues and come up with community-based solutions to ensure the building and its residents are settling into the community safely.

How did individual Council members vote on approving this project?

Due to paramountcy, Council did not have a vote on approving this project. However, the City is working closely with BC Housing, and other community partners, to support the success of this building.

ZONING AND DENSITY

Is the White Road property zoned for this size of a building?

In the City's previous Zoning Bylaw, which was in place from 1988 to 2018, the White Road property was zoned Medium Density, which permitted the construction of a four-storey apartment building. In the current Zoning Bylaw No. 3166, adopted by the previous Council, in March 2018, the property was zoned High Density Residential, which permits the construction of a three to five storey apartment building. BC Housing is committed to meeting the City's height requirements and are proposing a building designed to accommodate up to 50 studio (one-person) apartments.

You can visit <https://letstalkhousingbc.ca/cowichan-valley-white-road> to share your questions and learn more about the project and to access information about how supportive housing works and research studies showing what BC Housing has learned from supportive housing projects across BC.

BC Housing, the City, and other partners will be holding small group neighbourhood meetings in a virtual format instead of meeting in person due to concerns around COVID-19. These sessions will take place on August 11 and August 19. Please email communityrelations@bchousing.org to sign up. Neighbours and residents are invited to provide input on how to support the success of this new building.

Why did Council amend the bylaw to end public input on the White Road project?

The Zoning Amendment Bylaw No. 3166.01, that was considered at the Monday, June 20th, 2020 Council meeting has no connection to the White Road supportive housing development. The primary purpose of Zoning Amendment Bylaw No. 3166.01, was to permit a women's second stage housing (usually a private, secure, low-cost apartment or townhouse units where women and children can live safely and independently typically for 6 to 18 months after fleeing violence) in high density residential zones without a rezoning, in order to ensure the location can be kept confidential to protect the safety of women and children. Other amendments in the bylaw including changes to density bonusing provisions and off-street parking regulations, which also have no connection on the White Road supportive housing development. Council waived the public hearing on this bylaw because the objectives of the Zoning Amendment Bylaw are seen to be consistent with the Affordable and Special Needs Housing Policies of the City of Duncan Official Community Plan Bylaw No. 2030, 2007, as permitted under the *Community Charter*.

PARKING AND TRAFFIC

What about additional traffic and parking on the street once construction starts?

BC Housing has a traffic study of the area underway. The City will work with BC Housing to mitigate the impacts of traffic and parking in this area. BC Housing has advised that supportive housing typically has a low demand for parking because many residents do not have vehicles. The building will have a number of parking spots included in the design plans for staff, visitors, and residents.

OPERATIONAL

Is this a “try out to see if it works” strategy?

Provincially funded supportive housing has been operating successfully in BC for decades. The first supportive housing development was established 47 years ago. In recent years, BC Housing has built new supportive housing developments.

What kind of non-profit society will run this site? What will be their qualifications be and how will the City pick them?

As this is their project, BC Housing will identify an operator for the White Road supportive housing development; the City is not involved in this process. BC Housing will select a non-profit housing provider that has extensive experience working with people experiencing homelessness. The service provider for the Drinkwater Road supportive housing is the Lookout Housing and Health Society.

The operator of the supportive housing development will be on site 24/7 and provide the building's residents with support services to help them lead healthier, safer lives. This is not a shelter or transition house; these are individual long-term apartments that people will live in and call home. Supports include medical health services, mental health, and addictions services, as well as food, laundry, and security.

NEIGHBOURHOOD IMPACT

Who will pay for the increased policing necessary to deal with associated problems around increased criminal activity? How can all levels of government help people feel safe in their homes and on their neighbourhood streets?

Security is part of the 24/7 on site supports listed as part of the facilities operations. Staff will be on-site and available to respond directly to any concerns that arise in a timely manner. In addition, the City has increased spending and efforts throughout the City over the past year.

Impacted community stakeholders and neighbours will have input into the process through BC Housing's Community Advisory Committee (CAC), which will be established prior to the building of this project and will oversee the integration within the community and work to address any concerns raised by neighbourhood residents and businesses. Through the CAC you will have a team of people from your neighborhood, including residents and business owners, RCMP, and City representatives, who will work with the operator and BC Housing. Your representatives will be the voice of your neighborhood to address issues and develop solutions.

The City has also been working with working with RCMP, North Cowichan, and Cowichan Tribes on the Safer Community Plan, which focuses patrols along the highway corridor but also includes bike patrols throughout the broader core area. In addition, the City has been working with the RCMP Community Policing on ways to increase local involvement at the community level.

Will the White Road supportive housing project decrease property values in the neighbourhood?

Results of research completed in 2019 show that out of 13 BC supportive housing sites the property values immediately surrounding 10 of the sites either kept pace or surpassed surrounding municipal trends. Property values for the other three sites were not notably different compared to municipal trends. More information about property values is available at

<https://letstalkhousingbc.ca/cowichan-valley-white-road>

Shouldn't the whole community have input on how to deal with homelessness and opioid crisis?

No one person, group, government agency, or organization will be able to solve the homelessness and opioid crisis. Community input and ideas are always welcomed by the City and we constantly invite people to contribute their ideas and thoughts on the topic.

Since the election in 2018, only 1 ½ years ago, the City has worked to create a number of strong partnerships to address what we can at a municipal level working with North Cowichan and Cowichan Tribes and the Downtown Business Improvement Association. The Cowichan Valley also has a Regional Leadership Team - comprised of elected municipal and first nations leaders, the medical health officer, the RCMP, School District, and area MPs and MLAs - that advocates to the Provincial and Federal governments for the policies, supports and services lacking in our communities to address these issues and the devastating impacts they are having in the lives of everyone involved. These included requests for support funding for services such as mental health facilities and rehabilitation facilities. The correspondence for these requests is available on the City's website.

Centennial Park is an important part of our neighborhood. How do we keep it safe?

We anticipate limited, if any, impact from this development on Centennial Park. Residents of this development will be community members who will be welcome to enjoy the park. The best way to keep it safe for all users is for all members of the community to continue to frequent the park and enjoy the facilities.

The City's bylaw enforcement department is aware of sporadic illegal camping at Centennial Park and will continue to patrol the park, particularly during the evening and nighttime hours. Any overnight shelter must be temporary (for example tents or shelter constructed from a tarp, plastic or cardboard), and overnight shelter can only be erected from 7:00 pm – 9:00 am.

NEXT STEPS

This BC Housing led project will be working in partnership with the City of Duncan, to undertake public outreach on the project, and invite public involvement, input and comments on the project. The first step BC Housing has set up is a place where community members can ask BC Housing questions and provide input at <https://letstalkhousingbc.ca/cowichan-valley-white-road> or communityrelations@bchousing.org.

In the coming weeks, BC Housing will be setting up CAC that will oversee the supportive housing's integration within the community and will address any concerns raised by people in the neighbourhood. The CAC is a key part of how to ensure that supportive housing buildings integrate well into the neighbourhood, and the experience is that they have been very effective at helping communities work together to address possible concerns, set priorities and ensure a positive connection with neighbours.

WHO TO CONTACT

Questions or comments related to the White Road project can be directed to Communityrelations@bchousing.org

Questions for Mayor and Council? Contact duncan@duncan.ca

Questions for City staff? Contact the Director of Corporate Services at 250-746-6126 or paige@dunca.ca.
