



# Vancouver Housing Update E-Newsletter

## MESSAGE FROM VANCOUVER'S COMMUNITY NON-PROFIT PARTNERS

### Guest Editorial: Shirley Chan, CEO, Building Opportunities with Business



Economic development in the Downtown Eastside goes hand in hand with finding safe, secure and affordable homes for the people who live in the community. In my work with Building Opportunities with Business (BOB) and my previous experience as the non-market housing director for the City of Vancouver, I have seen first hand that the success of businesses and residents depends on this. When BOB places a person who has stable housing in a job, their chances of success are significantly higher than a person whose housing situation is uncertain.

Businesses will thrive serving the residents rather than struggling with the problems associated with homelessness on their doorstep.

It is commendable that BC Housing has purchased many SRO hotels in the Downtown Eastside with non-profit housing providers managing and offering support services. While SROs are not the best housing, they meet a basic need when the quality of the units has been greatly improved by BC Housing. Furthermore, having this stock of housing in the public domain improves tenure for residents and repurposes these buildings from making a profit to providing a service.

BC Housing intervention has also improved the retail storefronts of these SROs. Upgrading the retail space for community-friendly retailers and improving the facades improve the quality of life for the area residents and contributes to the economic vitality of the neighbourhood. The Rice Block is home to a social enterprise that supports the women who live there. A new restaurant that will assist and serve the community will soon be open in the Pennsylvania.

Storefront by storefront, person by person, we are seeing improvements in the Downtown Eastside. There is still much more to be done, and we are working with our community partners to ensure the people who live here benefit from the improvements. We are thrilled that new employers such as London Drugs, Nesters Market, and SFU Theatre have risen to the challenge and with our support are employing residents.

At BOB, we believe everyone needs a job, a friend, and a home. BOB can connect people to jobs and provide support as a friend. We count on BC Housing and the non-profit housing providers to provide more affordable and well-managed housing units available in the inner city.

*Building Opportunities with Business is a non-profit organization that is championing an inclusive revitalization process for the inner city that values existing businesses and residents.*

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## SHELTER, HOUSING AND THE 2010 GAMES

### **Covenant House expansion aided by VANOC funding**

Young people fleeing physical, emotional and/or sexual abuse or those who have been forced from their homes often end up in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. Once there, they can expect to be vulnerable to violence and disease as well as sexual predators. They will likely end up living rough with no roof over their heads and tempted to use drugs, some of which are extremely addictive and life threatening.

In the past 10 years, Covenant House has helped 10,000 youth at risk in the Downtown Eastside who have come to the site looking for shelter, food, clothing, and counselling. The sad truth is there are more young people living rough in the Downtown Eastside than Covenant House has space for. However, capacity at the site was greatly increased recently thanks to funding from several partners including the federal and provincial governments and VANOC. The newly renovated and expanded development now provides 32 transitional housing beds with support services for homeless and at-risk youth ages 16 to 22. As part of its Olympics Legacies program, VANOC contributed \$250,000 towards renovations at Covenant House. The funding was part of VANOC's bid commitment to create 250 social housing units and to maximize the benefits of the Games to British Columbians.

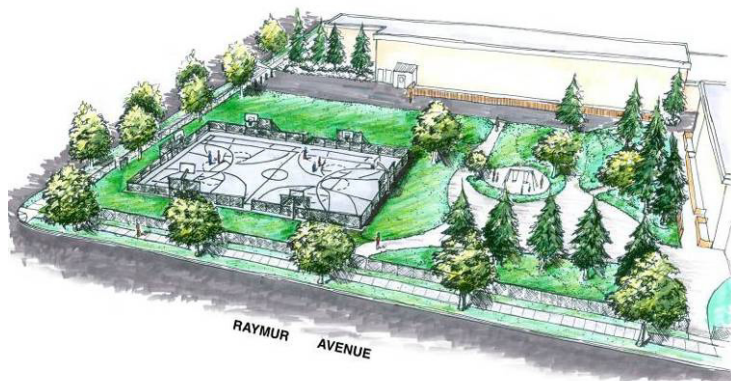
An estimated 65 per cent of the homeless youth who receive support from Covenant House go on to live independent lives. "The addition of these 32 transitional housing beds allows us to offer support to more young people, helping them overcome the barriers that are preventing their independence and significantly reducing the number of youth previously turned away due to lack of space," said Krista Thompson, executive director, Covenant House.

### **2010 Legacy Sport Court**

Stamps Place, a BC Housing site in Vancouver's inner-city Strathcona neighbourhood, will soon have a Sport Court thanks to a partnership between Coca-Cola Canada, 2010 Legacies Now, Ray Cam Community Cooperative Centre, Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation, and BC Housing.

Coca-Cola is providing the funds to build the Sport Court and BC Housing is providing the land. Coca Cola will use funds received from collecting empty plastic containers (under one litre) of its products sold and distributed at Olympic and Paralympic venues between January 15 and March 21, 2010. The Sport Court will be primarily a basketball/ball hockey court providing a place for young people, families and the young at heart to participate in active, healthy play. Ray Cam Community Cooperative Centre will provide youth programming for young people during the summer months.

Construction on the Sport Court will begin this summer and is expected to be complete by the fall.



### **Temporary hostel at El Dorado Hotel funded by VANOC**

VANOC is using the former Eldorado Hotel at Kingsway and Nanaimo as the site of a temporary hostel for people who come to Vancouver because of the Games but without accommodations in hand. (Salt Lake City organizers found that approximately 250 people a night were in the city without having made arrangements for a room. Many of these people arrived in town in hopes of getting some temporary work or to share the Olympic host city experience.)

In order to avoid visitors putting strains on shelters in Vancouver, VANOC is funding the hostel which opened in early December 2009. The hostel can accommodate a maximum of 318 people.

After the Games, VANOC and Eldorado Operations will collaborate on the donation of furniture and equipment purchased for the hostel to various overnight camps serving children and families in need in the Lower Mainland.

## SINGLE ROOM OCCUPANCY HOTELS

### De-bugging bed bugs: a technical paper on heat treatment rooms

Heat treatment rooms (often referred to as bed bug saunas) are the newest weapon in the fight against bed bugs. These have been built at the Walton and Orwell hotels in Vancouver (managed by Lookout Emergency Aid Society and Vancouver Native Housing Society) and at Lookout's Russell Housing Centre in New Westminster. The Lux, which is operated by RainCity Housing and Support Society, also has a purpose-built heat treatment room.

Plans are underway to include heat treatment rooms in a dozen or more new BC Housing sites currently in development. The rooms are large enough to heat furniture, mattresses, household items and personal possessions to very high temperatures for two hours – long enough to kill bed bug eggs, nymph/larva, and adults. Items are treated as new tenants move in or when an infestation breaks out.

Michael Kennedy, BC Housing's Manager, Standards and Innovation, has created a technical bulletin on heat treatment rooms that can be accessed at [www.bchousing.org/resources/Programs/ILBC/29-09-12-15-Heat Treatment Room for Bed Bugs.pdf](http://www.bchousing.org/resources/Programs/ILBC/29-09-12-15-Heat_Treatment_Room_for_Bed_Bugs.pdf). "The measures we're taking won't eliminate bed bugs infestations but they do help to prevent and contain them to individual units and control their spread," said Kennedy.

### Reno updates

Renovations are now complete at the Orwell Hotel. The 55-unit SRO underwent a major restoration of the heritage façade, upgrades to the mechanical and electrical systems and received new finishes. The new storefront and ground floor amenity space have just been completed.

A replica of the original 1930s art deco neon sign has been reinstated on the Rainier Hotel's exterior. Funding for the sign was provided by the City of Vancouver's Great Beginnings Program.

Phase 2 of renovations at the Marble Arch were recently finished allowing for tenants to move back into units on the south side of the building. The entire southern exterior wall had to be replaced. Phase 2 of renovations also saw new electrical systems, upgrades to the mechanical system that serve the southern side of the building, and new finishes.

Renovations are ongoing at Dunsmuir House. Contractors expect to have completed work on the renovated units and bathrooms by late February. The washrooms were in a deplorable state when BC Housing took possession of the building and renovations on these are being done on a floor-by-floor basis. Kitchens are being added to every floor. There is a laundry room already on level 2; a second is being added on level 4.

### Tentative SRO construction schedule as of February 1, 2010

| Hotel                          | Units <sup>1</sup> | Tenancy status                        | Non-Profit Operator                                                                        | Renovation Status       | Estimated Completion Date |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| 54 East Cordova                | 34                 | Tenanted                              | Atira Property Management                                                                  | COMPLETE                | COMPLETE                  |
| 566 Powell Street <sup>2</sup> | 12                 | Tenanted                              | Atira Property Management                                                                  | No renovations required | COMPLETE                  |
| Arco Hotel                     | 64                 | Tenanted                              | Atira Property Management                                                                  | Pre-renovation          | TBD                       |
| Beacon Hotel                   | 47                 | Tenanted                              | PHS Community Services Society                                                             | COMPLETE                | COMPLETE                  |
| Carl Rooms                     | 44                 | Tenanted                              | Atira Property Management with support services provided by PHS Community Services Society | COMPLETE                | COMPLETE                  |
| Dominion Hotel                 | 63                 | Tenanted                              | Atira Property Management                                                                  | COMPLETE                | COMPLETE                  |
| Drake Hotel <sup>3</sup>       | 26                 | Tenanted                              | Atira Property Management                                                                  | COMPLETE                | COMPLETE                  |
| Dunsmuir House <sup>4</sup>    | 166                | Phased renovation /partially occupied | Atira Property Management with support services provided by RainCity Housing and Support   | UNDERWAY                | TBD                       |

|                                                                                                                                                                      |     |                                       |                                                                                            |                |                                                      |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                                                                                      |     |                                       | Society                                                                                    |                |                                                      |
| Gastown Hotel                                                                                                                                                        | 93  | Tenanted                              | Atira Property Management                                                                  | Pre-renovation | TBD                                                  |
| Hazelwood Hotel                                                                                                                                                      | 112 | Tenanted                              | Atira Property Management with support services provided by MPA Society                    | COMPLETE       | COMPLETE                                             |
| London Hotel <sup>2</sup>                                                                                                                                            | 72  | Tenanted                              | Atira Property Management                                                                  | COMPLETE       | COMPLETE                                             |
| Marble Arch Hotel                                                                                                                                                    | 142 | Phased renovation /partially occupied | Atira Property Management with support services provided by PHS Community Services Society | UNDERWAY       | Ph. 1: COMPLETE<br>Ph. 2: COMPLETE<br>Ph. 3 & 4: TBD |
| Marr Hotel                                                                                                                                                           | 29  | Tenanted                              | Atira Women's Resource Society                                                             | COMPLETE       | COMPLETE                                             |
| Orange Hall                                                                                                                                                          | 27  | Tenanted                              | S.U.C.C.E.S.S.                                                                             | COMPLETE       | COMPLETE                                             |
| Orwell Hotel                                                                                                                                                         | 55  | Tenanted                              | Vancouver Native Housing Society                                                           | COMPLETE       | COMPLETE                                             |
| Park Hotel                                                                                                                                                           | 50  | Tenanted                              | Atira Property Management with support services provided by PHS Community Services Society | COMPLETE       | COMPLETE                                             |
| Pender Hotel                                                                                                                                                         | 23  | Empty                                 | Vancouver Native Housing Society                                                           | UNDERWAY       | TBD                                                  |
| Rainier Hotel                                                                                                                                                        | 41  | Tenanted                              | PHS Community Services Society                                                             | COMPLETE       | COMPLETE                                             |
| The Rice Block                                                                                                                                                       | 42  | Tenanted                              | Atira Women's Resource Society                                                             | COMPLETE       | COMPLETE                                             |
| Roosevelt Hotel                                                                                                                                                      | 42  | Tenanted                              | PHS Community Services Society                                                             | UNDERWAY       | February 2010                                        |
| Savoy Hotel                                                                                                                                                          | 25  | Tenanted                              | Atira Property Management with support services provided by MPA Society                    | COMPLETE       | COMPLETE                                             |
| Shaldon Hotel                                                                                                                                                        | 54  | Tenanted                              | RainCity Housing and Support Society                                                       | Pre-renovation | TBD                                                  |
| St. Helen's Hotel                                                                                                                                                    | 86  | Tenanted                              | Atira Property Management with support services provided by Coast Foundation Society       | COMPLETE       | COMPLETE                                             |
| Tamura House                                                                                                                                                         | 110 | Tenanted                              | Lookout Emergency Aid Society                                                              | Pre-renovation | TBD                                                  |
| Walton Hotel                                                                                                                                                         | 48  | Tenanted                              | Lookout Emergency Aid Society                                                              | COMPLETE       | COMPLETE                                             |
| <sup>1</sup> Unit numbers are best estimates of how many units there will be in each building post-renovations.                                                      |     |                                       |                                                                                            |                |                                                      |
| <sup>2</sup> Five-year renewable lease.                                                                                                                              |     |                                       |                                                                                            |                |                                                      |
| <sup>3</sup> This City-owned building is being used for tenant relocations. It will be replaced with a new building managed by RainCity Housing and Support Society. |     |                                       |                                                                                            |                |                                                      |
| <sup>4</sup> Three-year lease.                                                                                                                                       |     |                                       |                                                                                            |                |                                                      |

## Outreach workers find homes for at-risk youth in SROs

When youth run away from home, many find themselves living rough on the streets in the Downtown Eastside. It's not a place you would want any child to be. To make things worse, there is little if any affordable, safe housing for these at-risk youth, especially youth who are still using drugs or alcohol.

That's why Watari staffers Shannon Gaudette and Mich Low (formerly Cyr) were pleased when the government-owned SROs' began providing low-barrier supportive housing to the community. Watari is a non-profit society offering youth, community and family services in the Downtown Eastside. Shannon coordinates its Hard Targeting Project and works with high-risk/street-involved youth up to age 21; Mich is Watari's Youth Outreach Worker in the Downtown Eastside and works with clients up to age 24. They work with at least 80 homeless youth in the area.

"Most of the youth we work with struggle with addiction and mental illness," said Shannon. "With childhoods filled with abuse and trauma, many of the youth ran away from their family homes and/or government-funded care homes at very young ages

and ended up on the Downtown Eastside. Many have been homeless for years. In the system, these youth are often referred to as street entrenched and service resistant. We've found that this is far from the truth. What needs to happen is the services need to be adapted to meet the youth where they're at."

Shannon and Mich connected with staff from the Supportive Housing Registry (SHR) last spring and to date have placed about a dozen youth in the government SROs. "We go with them to their assessments for emotional support," said Shannon. "The SHR staff are very positive and respectful, but this is something that's outside a youth's comfort zone so it's important to be with them."

When a Watari client finds housing, Mich and Shannon make sure they have the best shot possible at a successful tenancy. "We give them a start-up kit and introduce them to the hotel staff," said Mich. "We teach them how to clean their rooms and can help mediate issues between them and other tenants or the staff. The hotel staff all know who we are; we make a point of being very visible. We check on them or leave food a couple times a week. They know they can call us if anything comes up."

"All of them really appreciate having a home," added Shannon. "A lot of them still have pretty chaotic lives; they've spent years in addiction and trauma. I remind myself that the first step in any healing process is having a safe home that is their own and is always there. The next step will be to develop some second-stage housing for those youth who are ready to move forward from the low-barrier programs."

### **Frontline worker says things are getting better in the DTES**

Jeff Colvin grew up in East Vancouver, not far from where he now works as RainCity Housing and Support Society's manager of the Shaldon Hotel. He was first drawn to the Downtown Eastside some 13 years ago when a family friend told him there was a position available at RainCity's Triage Shelter as a cook. While it was the opportunity to have a job that initially sparked his interest, it was the difference RainCity makes in so many lives that has kept him active in the neighbourhood.

"The work I saw RainCity doing inspired me to want to do more for the community and created a sense of personal responsibility," said Jeff. "Over the years at the shelter, I saw friends of friends who needed to use its services. It reminded me that most of us are just one or two paycheques away from possibly being homeless. And, it made me want to make our community a better place."

After working as the Triage Shelter's cook for a couple of years, Jeff became a community support worker. Other jobs with RainCity followed including work as an in-house tenant support worker, time spent as part of an outreach team engaging with people with concurrent disorders, then supervising and later managing the Triage Shelter. In September 2008, Jeff accepted the position of manager of the Shaldon, a 100-year-old single room occupancy hotel that had recently been purchased by the provincial government.

"Since then, we've seen lots of tenants move on to better housing," said Jeff. "A large group moved out to the Lux, a new supportive housing development operated by RainCity which is just across the street. A few have moved into treatment for their addictions. And, one woman had a baby and has consequently found a better home."

Other tenants have chosen to stay. "Several decided to remain at the Shaldon; they've lived here a long time and like the building and the staff," added Jeff. "There's a really positive attitude in this building." Jeff believes life is improving for people living in the Downtown Eastside. "I've been down here a long time now and I can definitely say it used to be much harder to get into drug/alcohol treatment or to get assessed for mental health concerns. There's also improved access to housing. It's not as good as it needs to be, but it's definitely better than it was."



### **New emergency winter shelters open in Vancouver**

The City of Vancouver, with funding from the provincial government, has opened four emergency shelters in different neighbourhoods: Mount Pleasant; South Granville; West End; and Kitsilano. The communities where the shelters will be located have been identified as having substantial homeless populations and a lack of shelter services. These low-barrier shelters will be open until April 30, 2010 and are in addition to three HEAT shelters opened in 2008 that will also continue operating until April 30. Altogether, there are seven City shelters operating this winter with space for 500 people.

The first of the new winter shelters opened December 22 in the Mount Pleasant neighbourhood with space for up to 40 people. The site, 677 East Broadway, is one of the City of Vancouver's 14 sites that will be developed into supportive housing in partnership with BC Housing. A second shelter, with space for another 40 people, opened January 6 at 1435 Granville Street (the location of a previous HEAT shelter). Space for another 40 homeless people opened January 12 at 747 Cardero Street in the city's West End. RainCity Housing and Support Society is operating the Mount Pleasant, Granville Street, and West End shelters.

The final City winter shelter opened January 15 at 1642 West 4th Avenue in Kitsilano. This shelter, with capacity for 40 people, is operated by MPA Society.

These shelters provide a safe place to stay and two meals a day during the winter months. As low-barrier facilities, they welcome homeless people who may wish to bring shopping carts and/or pets with them.

### **Creating a caring environment for women seeking shelter**

The clients who stay at St. James Community Service Society's Powell Place Shelter in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside have one thing in common. They are all cared for by staff who are genuinely concerned about them. Rhonda Peters supervises those staff.

"Having a compassionate environment makes a big difference to how well the women we work with do," said Rhonda. "One of the main things we work with them on is finding housing. Some request to go to treatment or detox; others stay for a couple of weeks before moving on. We work with them to find the appropriate place to live based on their lifestyle needs, rather than just a place to stay. We stay in touch once they find housing in case they need help. This means they have supports they need to stay housed."

Beyond needing a decent and safe place to live, many of the shelter's clients have addictions and/or mental health issues. St. James' staff connect them with support services within their community, and listen to their concerns about some of the challenges they are facing. They will accompany them to appointments if needed. "A big part of our work is to show the women that they deserve to be cared for," said Rhonda.

"Their feelings about living on the streets and addictions can make them feel they are not worthy. We try to create an environment that builds their esteem. That helps them realize the benefits to eating healthy foods, getting enough sleep, wearing warm clothes in the winter... showing them they deserve to take care of themselves, as well as to be taken care of."

There are 26 beds at Powell Place – and they are always full. "There's usually about five minutes between the time someone leaves and a new client arrives," said Rhonda. The recent opening of The Umbrella at 625 Powell Street., another shelter operated by St. James, added an additional 26 beds that are available to homeless women in the Downtown Eastside.

The effect of being funded to be open 24 hours a day and to offer support services has been "amazing" in Rhonda's eyes. "We've seen huge increases in the number of women who stay housed. The standards of the single room occupancy hotels have also improved with BC Housing's purchase of so many of them. The women we place there now feel they are moving on to a better place."

## WHO'S WHO

### Vancouver's Community Non-Profit Partners

Sixteen of the city's most experienced and respected non-profit groups work to deliver housing, shelter and support services to those in greatest need. These community partners operate the SROs, deliver the Homeless Outreach Program, and/or provide emergency shelter in Vancouver. This chart outlines the work that the group does with BC Housing and is not a complete list of the organizations' activities.

| Group                                                        | Contact information                       | Participation                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Atira Women's Resource Society and Atira Property Management | www.atira.bc.ca<br>604-331-1407           | SRO Operator (566 Powell Street; Arco Hotel; Carl Rooms; Cordova Residence; Dominion Hotel; Drake Hotel; Gastown Hotel; Hazelwood Hotel; London Hotel; Marble Arch Hotel; Marr Hotel; Park Hotel; Rice Block; Savoy Hotel; St. Helen's Hotel); Emergency Shelter Program (Bridge Women's Emergency Shelter) |
| Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Vancouver           | www.rcav.org<br>604-443-3219              | Emergency Shelter Program (Catholic Charities)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Coast Foundation Society                                     | www.coastmentalhealth.com<br>604-872-3502 | SRO Support Services (St. Helen's Hotel); Homeless Outreach Program (Yaletown)                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Collingwood Neighbourhood House Society                      | www.cnh.bc.ca<br>604-435-0323             | Homeless Outreach Program (Collingwood/Renfrew)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Covenant House Vancouver                                     | www.covenanthousebc.org<br>604-638-4438   | Emergency Shelter Program (Covenant House; Rights of Passage Shelter)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Kettle Friendship Society                                    | www.thekettle.ca                          | Homeless Outreach Program (Grandview)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Lookout Emergency Aid Society                                | www.lookoutsociety.bc.ca<br>604-255-0340  | SRO Operator (Tamura House; Walton Hotel; College Place Hotel); Emergency Shelter Program (Yukon Shelter; Lookout Downtown Shelter)                                                                                                                                                                         |
| MPA Society                                                  | www.mpa-society.org<br>604-482-3700       | SRO Support Services (Savoy Hotel; Hazelwood Hotel); Homeless Outreach Program (Kitsilano)                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| PHS Community Services Society                               | 604-683-0073                              | SRO Operator (Roosevelt Hotel; Rainier Hotel; Beacon Hotel); SRO Support Services (Carl Rooms; Marble Arch Hotel; Park Hotel)                                                                                                                                                                               |
| RainCity Housing and Support Society                         | www.raincityhousing.org<br>604-662-7023   | SRO Operator (Shaldon Hotel); Emergency Shelter Program (Triage Shelter); Homeless Outreach Program (DTES)                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| St. James Community Services Society                         | www.sjcss.com<br>604-606-0300             | Emergency Shelter Program (St. Elizabeth's Home; Powell Place Emergency Shelter)                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| S.U.C.C.E.S.S.                                               | www.successbc.ca<br>604-684-1628          | SRO Operator (Orange Hall)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| The Governing Council of the Salvation Army in Canada        | www.salvationarmy.org<br>604-299-3908     | Emergency Shelter Program (Belkin House; The Haven; The Beacon; Crosswalk)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Vancouver Native Housing Society                             | www.vnhs.ca<br>604-320-3312               | SRO Operator (Orwell Hotel; Pender Hotel)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Vancouver Recovery Club                                      | www.thevrc.ca<br>604-708-9955             | Homeless Outreach Program (Mt. Pleasant)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| The Vi Fineday Family Shelter Society                        | 604-736-2423                              | Emergency Shelter Program (Vi Fineday Family Shelter)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |