

Questions About Orca Place, the Supportive Housing at 222 Corfield Avenue South in Parksville, BC

Revised: 13 June 2019

Was this housing project created for Parksville specifically or BC Housing?

The Oceanside Task Force on Homelessness (OTFH) worked for nine years to find solutions for the homelessness that people in the region experience. This project is not the entire solution, but it is a big step forward. As a team we worked with BC Housing to ensure that this building will fit the needs of the community. The Housing Outreach Support Team (HOST) was started by the OTFH and has housed and supported more than 50 clients since we started three years ago. Therefore, we already have a relationship with many of the clients who will live in the building. We've had to house several clients in outlying areas because they were unable to find affordable housing in Parksville. Living in Parksville will allow clients access to services to improve themselves. Isolation and lack of social integration is detrimental to mental health.

Does Parksville have the resources to handle the needs of the facility residents?

Yes, there has been a great collaboration between organizations in the Oceanside area including Island Health, Forward House, the Society of Organized Services, Canadian Mental Health Association, Island Crisis Care Society, the Salvation Army, and Manna Homeless Society, among others. Since most of the building's new tenants are already accessing services in the community, the increase in demand will be modest.

Can people from outside the region live here?

The Oceanside Housing Outreach Services Team (HOST) has a waiting list of people from the area needing this kind of housing and does not anticipate any movement of individuals to the community from other regions. Oceanside residents will always be given priority.

Will ICCS move people here from Nanaimo?

No. BC Housing is committed to working with the City of Nanaimo on similar projects in that community.

Why this location?

222 Corfield Avenue South is centrally-located vacant land. The Rapid Response to Housing program uses modular units that require appropriate land and space to accommodate the faster delivery and installation times. This site was available and appropriate. Several factors are considered when

identifying a site, including: land ownership, current land use/zoning, lease and legal considerations, access to transit, access to health services, and site access and servicing (utilities).

Wouldn't a more remote location be better?

One of the key factors in making supportive housing a success is proximity to amenities/services and accessibility to transit. People experiencing homelessness are already a part of our community; we want to help them find safe and stable housing in the community. This is the first step in providing safe and supportive housing for those currently staying on the streets or in shelters.

Why are you bringing more crime and homeless individuals into our neighborhood?

Homeless individuals are already part of the community, and providing housing and supports will lead to increased stability and wellness in their lives. It will also lead to less strain on emergency services. If there are concerns or problems that occur with specific individuals, ICCS is committed to working with the community and the RCMP on solutions.

Evidence from Uplands Walk in Nanaimo and Hearthstone Place in Abbotsford, among others, show no measurable increase in crime in surrounding neighbourhoods. On the contrary, crime generally goes down. Statistics from the Abbotsford Police show the neighbourhood surrounding the building saw only around half a dozen criminal complaints between May and October 2017. That figure is the fewest such complaints for that period over the last five years.

Will the value of my home decrease?

It's been three years since Uplands Walk opened. Since then, the increase in the value of houses in the Uplands neighborhood are consistent with the increase in value across all homes in Nanaimo.

How will someone apply to live here and how will they be chosen?

Successful applicants will be adults (19 or older) who are "absolute homeless" or at risk of homelessness, with an income of less than the Housing Income Limits (HILs) for Parksville-Qualicum. The Vulnerability Assessment Tool (VAT) will be used to assess applicants' needs. A collaborative community process will involve several community organizations to recommend individuals for residency, similar to the process used now in Parksville for allocating rent subsidies.

Do the eligibility requirements consider criminal records?

Having a criminal record would not necessarily exclude a person from eligibility.

How long can a person live here once they move in?

Residents will receive support to maintain their tenancy, including daily meal services for as long as they choose to live here, and as long as they comply with their program agreement. People wishing to move on to other types of housing will be supported to do so.

Why is support provided to residents?

Support is provided because it increases tenant's ability to maintain their apartment and move towards greater freedom and responsibility. Examples of the kinds of support that will be offered include

individualized case plans to further develop life and social skills, employment planning, and other assistance to manage the transition to independence and recovery. Programming space will be available for skills training including meal preparation and budgeting. Other services will include outreach workers, wellness checks, and support groups.

How many high support clients will be housed?

The Vulnerability Assessment Tool (VAT) has three levels. Up to 20% of residents at Orca Place will be level 3 (the highest support needed).

VAT training manual: <https://www.bchousing.org/publications/vat-training-manual.pdf>

Will it be low-barrier housing?

The term used by BC Housing for Orca Place is “housing with high supports”. There are multiple barriers that prevent people from being housed, one of which is accessibility. This building will have several accessible units.

Information on supportive housing: <http://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/visions/supported-housing-vol12/editors-message>

Will it be like crisis stabilization at Hirst House?

Crisis stabilization is temporary housing and funded through Mental Health and Substance Use at Island Health. Orca Place will instead provide permanent housing with high supports.

Will people live there rent-free?

All residents will pay rent and sign a program agreement.

Will clients be allowed to have overnight guests?

No. Clients will sign a program agreement stating that they won't have overnight guests.

Will residents be drug users?

The housing is designed to provide low cost apartments with supports to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Not all people who are homeless have substance use issues or addictions. Residents will make their own choices regarding lifestyle. Building staff will remind residents of appropriate and respectful behaviour as agreed to in their program agreement. Substance use and mental health challenges will be addressed through case plans and referrals to Island Health and related services. Staff will promote a recovery and wellness culture.

Will you be supplying harm reduction supplies to residents?

BC Housing requires harm reduction supplies and needle disposal to be available onsite for clients to help with the opioid crisis. Supplies will not be available for the general public.

Will there be a safe injection site?

No. The building will be made up of self-contained apartments for people who need support to maintain housing. There will not be safe injection options.

Are pets allowed?

The building will accommodate a reasonable number of pets. Policies will be in place to ensure that pets do not negatively affect other residents and the surrounding neighbourhood.

Is smoking allowed?

Smoking inside the building will not be allowed. There will be designated outdoor smoking areas on the property.

How many staff will be employed and what will their duties be?

Two or more employees will be on site at all times. The payroll will include 20 or more individuals. They will be responsible for maintaining security and safety within the building, and to maintain a good neighbour relationship with the surrounding neighbourhood. They will:

- Monitor who comes in and out of the building and will initiate wellness plans with all residents.
- Provide referrals to treatment, health services, and other community resources.
- Provide case planning and resident needs assessments.
- Assist with income assistance, pension benefits, disability benefits, obtaining ID, and establishing bank accounts.
- Provide group support services for life skills, information, and recreation.

Will Narcan (Naloxone) kits and training be provided to staff?

Yes. Narcan training is a requirement for all our staff.

Will staff have mental health and addiction training?

Yes. All ICCS Support Workers and have mental health and addiction training and experience.

What safety and security features will be in place?

Security features will include optimized lighting, fencing, and camera systems. A programmable fob system will limit movement within the building. A contained outdoor amenity space will provide a private area for smoking and dog walking. Also, the RCMP have offered to ensure that the plans for landscaping will provide optimal security.

Do you have a plan to keep people from loitering?

The staff will monitor loitering, and there will be a phone number available for neighbours to contact staff if they have any concerns.

Will the building also provide emergency shelter?

The building is designed to offer seasonal emergency shelter, however, due to a lawsuit challenging the rezoning process for 222 Corfield Avenue South, lease provisions have been altered to remove our ability to operate a shelter within the building.

Will there be a soup kitchen or drop-in program?

There will be no drop-in meals or services for non-residents.

Will residents be required to actively seek work or apply for education?

There is no requirement that residents be actively job searching or applying for education, but when people have stabilized they will be supported to pursue self-identified goals, including work and/or education.

Is there a curfew for residents? Are parties allowed?

There will be no curfews. No parties are allowed.

Will visitors be allowed?

Visitors will check in at the front desk with staff and the number of visitors at one time will be limited.

What expectations are made of residents? What consequences are there for non-compliance?

Residents will sign a program agreement and will be expected to abide by it. The program agreement will address expectations about appropriate and respectful behavior especially as it relates to the health and safety of themselves and others. Staff will work with residents and the neighbours to foster good neighbourhood relations.

Who will clean up any garbage around the site?

Staff and resident clean-up teams will respond to neighbourhood concerns and clean up any garbage in a reasonable radius around the building. Neighbours will have a phone number they can call to request cleanup.

How will aggression and violence be dealt with?

If a resident is aggressive or violent towards furniture, walls, and other objects, and will not retire to their apartment, the RCMP will be called. All violence towards people will result in immediate contact with police.

What happens if funding is no longer available from government after the project is complete?

The funding from the provincial government will be long term. Our contract for Samaritan House has been ongoing for more than 20 years.

Has ICCS ever managed anything this large?

This will be our largest building. After nearly 30 years of working in this field, and with an existing team of more than 60 employees, we feel confident we have the necessary resources and experience to be successful.

When will people move in?

This housing is urgently needed. The goal is to have the building open during the summer of 2019.

Who owns the land?

The City of Parksville owns the land.

Will there be opportunities to volunteer?

ICCS will provide opportunities for community members to volunteer. All volunteers must pass criminal record checks and complete volunteer training.

How can people donate items to residents?

The building will have limited storage and sorting spaces for donated items. ICCS will release a list of small or consumable items it will receive onsite. All other donations will be directed to agencies set up to take them, such as the Society of Organized Services and the Salvation Army. ICCS will explore voucher systems with such agencies so that residents can obtain donated items in an equitable manner.

How can I support this project?

Individuals are encouraged to speak to their neighbours about the benefits it will bring, and participate in the public process by speaking in favour at hearings and events. Financial donations to support enhanced services at the building can be made at: www.islandcrisiscaresociety.ca

For more information, please contact: Island Crisis Care Society 778-441-4227