

COURTENAY SUPER 8 COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS

[Updated July 3, 2023]

The following is an overview of the questions asked to the BC Housing Community Relations Inbox and through the Let's Talk portal in May and June of 2023.

LOCATION

Why has this location been selected?

The Super 8 is a temporary solution to an immediate need. Without this important shelter resource, people will be left outdoors and without access to a safe space and connection to support services.

BC Housing explored purchasing the Travelodge and was unable to come to acceptable terms with the owner.

BC Housing recognizes that the Super 8 is not the first choice of everyone in the community but it is the only choice given the immediate need of some of Courtenay's most vulnerable citizens. Appropriate building and site upgrades have been made to the Super 8 property to ensure the property follows all city and provincial building regulations. This includes security fencing, fire safety upgrades, and additional outdoor lighting.

BC Housing continues to explore permanent housing options in Courtenay. Housing residents of the Travelodge is a first step. Once guests have moved in, BC Housing is concurrently exploring possible permanent housing options for the site and elsewhere in community and will engage with the community to discuss its long-term use.

TIMESCALE and PERMITS

Are people on site already?

The Super 8 purchase closed on June 15. General renovations and clean-up has been done and residents have moved in. We will continue work on other life and safety upgrades. We are currently working with the City of Courtenay to meet their requirements for the Temporary Use Permit (TUP).

How are people there if the TUP has not been approved?

BC Housing needed to work quickly to ensure people staying at the Travelodge had access to a safe, secure home before the lease expired on June 30. We are putting the safety and wellbeing of these vulnerable residents at the forefront of our decision to purchase this building. Meanwhile, we are committed to working with the City of Courtenay to meet their requirements for the Temporary Use Permit.

What does a TUP mean?

A TUP will allow the Super 8 to operate for up to 36 months in this location. The Super 8 hotel building is an interim solution to an immediate need in the community. The goal is to build purpose built, permanent supportive housing to replace it. A permanent Supportive Housing project would require a full rezoning and development permit process.

How is this project being funded?

Funding is coming from the Province's Permanent Housing Plan program. This plan was established to ensure people housed during the pandemic would not return to homelessness. The Province, through BC Housing, will fund the purchase and operating costs of the building. The exact amounts will be finalized in the coming weeks.

What is a shelter?

Shelters are temporary but immediate places to stay for anyone who is homeless or at risk of homelessness.

The Super 8 hotel is not a shelter. It will offer residents the supports and services provided in BC Housing supportive housing. These include independent living, meals, connection to life skills training, and connection to health supports.

COMMUNITY NEED***Why is this needed in Courtenay?***

Shelter guests staying at the Travelodge are in immediate need. This purchase will ensure that shelter guests are not left homeless when the lease expires at the Travelodge in late June.

There is significant need in Courtenay and across the Comox Valley. The Comox Valley 2020 Point in Time homeless count- identified 132 people as homeless.

Courtney's housing registry listed 170 people on a waitlist as of March 31, 2023.

Social service providers report more people at risk and increased wait lists for services and homes in Courtenay and beyond.

OPERATIONS***Who is operating the Super 8 Hotel?***

Comox Valley Transition Society (CVTS) will operate the Super 8 for one year.

What happens after one year?

BC Housing will issue a Request for Proposal. BC Housing is committed to doing business in a fair, open and transparent manner. An RFP will be issued to ensure our due diligence in selecting an operator for the Super 8 and also to ensure the operator as the demonstrable experience needed to be successful operators of Supportive Housing. Of particular note is having demonstrable experience in creating and operating culturally-appropriate services for Indigenous Peoples.

How many staff will be on site?

A minimum of two staff are on site 24/7; a manager is also on-site during the day.

Who is going to be responsible for keeping the facility/area clean?

BC Housing and CVTS are committed to being good neighbours. Both staff and guests are committed to keeping the property maintained with a daily clean up, just as any other resident in the neighborhood.

What community safety and security measures are in place?

BC Housing and CVTS – and our shelter guests - are all committed to being good neighbours.

The safety of guests, staff and the surrounding community is a priority. Security measures include well-lit and fenced grounds and extensive camera monitoring. If concerns or problems occur with specific individuals on the project property, the operator will work with the individual and police to find solutions.

Supportive housing includes important safety features, both for guests and the community that include:

- An experienced non-profit housing operator to manage the building
- The most important security feature, both for guests and the community, is staffing. The building is staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to provide support for guests and manage the building. Staff will also be available to respond to any concerns from neighbours.
- Regular sweeps of the property and the immediate area by staff and guests will help maintain cleanliness.
- Guests sign program agreements around expectations for respect and safety of themselves and others.

How is entry/exit of people be managed/monitored?

Staff are aware of the entry and exit of people staying at the supportive housing through cameras and exterior door buzzers. The site is also fenced.

RESIDENTS***Who is living here?***

Shelter guests from the Travelodge have moved to the Super 8.

People who experience homelessness are as varied as any other neighbour. They may be seniors, people with disabilities, people who have employment but no housing, people who are working through mental health concerns and/or substance use. All residents in supportive housing have made a choice to work towards living a healthy, stable life.

What supports are provided?

The society will have staff on site 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to provide residents with support services, including daily meals, life-skills training and health and wellness services.

What in/out abilities do residents have?

Residents can come and go as they please. There is no curfew.

Can residents of the Super 8 have guests?

Yes, however there are no guests allowed past 7:00pm. Guests with problematic behavior will be asked to leave and may be banned from the property. Overnight guests must be approved by the program coordinator and are only allowed to stay one night.

What does a typical day look like?

Some general daily operations are consistent (i.e., staffing, meals, programming, etc.). However, other activities of daily life are different for each person staying at the Super 8. Some people have employment and

a set routine, while others may be in transition and able to move into other types of housing in the community. Others require more stabilizing, relationship building, and community connections which can be a slower process. The Super 8 hotel will be a community of care for all people staying there, which includes education and resources, community services, vocational assistance, housing assistance, life skills support, and goal setting.

Are pets allowed at the Super 8 hotel?

Yes. CVTS has a limit of one small pet per room, per person. If someone had a pet at time of move in, they are allowed to bring the pet with them. Established residents who want a pet once must get approval of the program coordinator. Safety of residents, staff and neighbours is a priority and appropriate measures are taken if a pet's behavior is not conducive to the setting.

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

Residents sign a program agreement that addresses expectations about appropriate and respectful behavior especially as it relates to the health and safety of themselves and others. Operational staff work with residents and the neighbours to foster good neighbourhood relations.

How are residents selected?

Priority has been given to those who live in the Travelodge.

Speaking more generally, residents are selected through a coordinated access process. Part of that selection is an assessment by those supporting residents and who have a strong understanding of who they are and their needs. Great care is put into this process. This ensures all needs can be met.

SECURITY

Will security services be on site?

Yes. CVTS works closely with a security team that is on site 24/7 to assist.

Can neighbours contact the CVTS and the Super 8 directly if there are any concerns?

The Super 8 will have a dedicated contact number available 24/7 and answered by staff. If staff are temporarily occupied, they respond as soon as possible. The contact number will be listed in a Who to Call sheet as well as posted to the BC Housing Let's Talk webpage.

What happens if someone is told to leave due to violent behaviour or non-compliance with the rules?

The safety of residents, staff, and the surrounding community is always a priority. Violence is not tolerated. If concerns or problems occur with specific individuals, CVTS will work with the individual, BC Housing, and authorities, if necessary, to find solutions. For those who are having difficulty complying with rules there is a progressive process. This may include verbal and written warnings, suspension and eviction, if necessary.

Eviction is a last resort. Experience has taught us that the impacts on the community as a result of a person being evicted is higher than when we work closely with the individual. CVTS will do all they can to help support a person having difficulties in anyway.

How will disruptive behaviour in the outdoor area be dealt with?

CVTS has procedures for trained shelter staff to work with any disruptive behaviours in or around of the immediate supportive housing area. Disruptive behaviours are addressed based on the individual circumstance of resident and the severity of the behaviour.

NEIGHBOURHOOD IMPACTS

Will supportive housing have an impact on nearby schools or daycares in my neighbourhood?

Many supportive housing sites for people experiencing homelessness across the province have been operating in their communities and near schools for 10+ years with no issues and with support from the community. There are over 210 provincially-funded supportive housing sites across the province that are within 500 metres of a school, and over 50% of provincially-funded supportive housing sites in B.C. within 500 metres of schools have been operating for 10+ years.

A BC Housing 2019 study (Modular Supportive Housing Resident Outcomes Study: Results for First Seven Modular Supportive Housing Developments) reported that 82% of survey respondents across seven modular supportive housing sites reported experiencing positive interactions with neighbours in the surrounding community since they moved in.

Will property values go down as a result of this shelter?

Residents should not be concerned about their property values. Research completed in 2019 of 13 B.C. supportive housing sites showed that property values immediately surrounding 10 sites either kept pace or surpassed surrounding municipal trends. Property values for the other three sites were not notably different compared to municipal trends.

How would you deal with increased crime and vandalism in the neighbourhood?

Labeling all people who have experienced homelessness in this way stereotypes and marginalizes vulnerable people. People who experience homelessness are as varied as any other neighbour. They may be seniors, people with disabilities, people who have employment but no housing, people who are working through mental health concerns and/or substance use. All residents in supportive housing have made a choice to work towards living a healthy, stable life.

Will there be a Community Advisory Committee (CAC)?

Yes, there will be a CAC.

DRUG AND ALCOHOL USE

Will drug or alcohol use be permitted onsite?

BC Housing's buildings are operated based on the widely recognized and proven Housing First model. Supportive housing residents are permitted to make their own choices in regard to lifestyle. This includes the decision to abstain or use drugs/alcohol in the privacy of their homes. If they choose to use, the operators work with each tenant to ensure they use safely.

We take a harm reduction approach, which means staff is available to support residents who are in various phases of substance use and can ensure the safety of guests who are active substance users. The operator works with Vancouver Island Health in determining best practices to ensure tenants are safe and healthy.

When residents are ready to make a change, staff on site can connect them with the appropriate support services.

How is the sobriety of those recovering from addiction supported when drug use is permitted?

Supporting people in all stages of recovery is part of the continuum of care. Beginning with the intake process, connection with shelter support staff, outreach staff, and access to other community services is discussed.

External supports can also include connecting people to a Nurse Practitioner and a Licensed Practical Nurse, as well as access to substance use treatment programs facilitated by the local health authority.

Where do people get their drugs? Are you supplying them?

Neither BC Housing nor CVTS supply drugs. People access their drugs and alcohol in whatever manner they are accessing them currently.

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