



THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF COURTENAY

## BRIEFING NOTE

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**To:** Council

**File No.:**

**From:** Director of Development Services

**Date:** September 27 2023

**Subject:** SRDDs BC Housing Update

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### **PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide Council with an update on current activities and collaboration with BC Housing and City of Courtenay staff in relation to a) permanent shelter, b) permanent supportive housing, and c) proposed rental housing development properties for the Building BC Community Housing Fund within Courtenay.

### **BACKGROUND:**

At the May 31, 2023 Regular Council meeting, Council received the rise and report from the special council meeting held May 28, 2023 to BC Housing which requested an update by October 27, 2023 to Council on the status of the development of a permanent purpose-built shelter and additional purpose-built supportive housing.

Staff have met with BC Housing staff on numerous occasions since May 31, 2023. Meetings with BC Housing staff have focused on establishing agreed upon priorities and strategies for meeting the shelter, supportive, and affordable housing needs in Courtenay. Additionally, substantial relationship development has occurred resulting in increased collaboration and communication between BC Housing and City staff. City and BC Housing staff have also established a regular meeting schedule to facilitate discussion on priorities and opportunities. The briefing note provides an overview of the current state of these discussions and respective priorities.

BC Housing is intending to attend the October 25, 2023 regular Council meeting to provide an update on the development of permanent shelter and supportive housing.

### **DISCUSSION:**

#### *Permanent Shelter*

BC Housing is actively working on identifying a location for a new, purpose-built permanent shelter in Courtenay. Staff are providing support in identifying suitable locations through review of zoning and OCP guidelines. It is staff's understanding that the new shelter, once built, will provide similar services to those currently provided at Connect but in a purpose-built building. Once a new shelter is complete, the Connect Centre would close at its current location on Cliffe Avenue.

BC Housing and Comox Valley Transition Society (CVTS) staff have also reached out to City staff to discuss the potential installation of temporary washrooms outside the Connect Centre to address the current safety and operational concerns of CVTS due to the lack of sufficient washrooms inside, as well as the concerns of neighbouring businesses who are experiencing the impacts of insufficient public washroom access for those

who are unhoused. Staff will review options and bring forward recommendations to Council if BC Housing and CVTS pursue this course of action.

### *Supportive Housing*

#### 1) The Lodge (TUP)

Staff have been requesting information from BC Housing on the outstanding conditions required to be met prior to issuance of the TUP. As of the date of this memo staff have been informed that the documents required will be submitted shortly. Regarding the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) BC Housing has reached out to the City and two staff members names have been put forward to sit on the committee, Susie Saunders and Marianne Wade as alternate.

#### 2) Permanent Supportive Housing

BC Housing is actively working to identify a location for an additional, purpose-built permanent supportive housing development in Courtenay. Staff are providing support to BC Housing in identifying suitable locations through review of zoning and OCP guidelines. It is staff's understanding that BC Housing is also in conversation with local developers about potential collaborative opportunities and will update Council when more information is received. As per our previous communication to Council, staff have reiterated that Courtenay needs at least 100 units of supportive housing and that the next supportive housing development should not occur within the downtown core. With approximately 60 units at The Lodge, an additional supportive housing development would likely result in Courtenay achieving the target of 100 units.

### *Building BC Community Housing Fund and associated programs to increase rental supply*

BC Housing and City staff are working collaboratively to identify strategies for increasing the supply of housing for those struggling to find suitable, adequate, and reasonably priced accommodation for the residents of Courtenay. These programs target middle to low income families, independent seniors and individuals. They do not include supportive services or residential care components.

The concept of this program is to provide a range of rental opportunities for residents; from those who require rents geared to income (30% of income) to those who can pay rents that are below market rents. The idea is to provide a range of rents that will cover operational costs of the development. BC Housing sets rents by unit type and household income.

As shared previously, BC Housing has confirmed that potential development proposals require municipalities or non-profits to access the Community Housing Fund Program through BC Housing call for proposals. The CHF proposal call was announced on August 28, 2023 and closes mid November 2023. Staff are aware that some local property owners may submit a proposal and will update Council as they receive information. The City's land portfolio offers some opportunity for sites that may meet the program criteria and staff are vetting them for viability. Staff have also connected key community agencies in Courtenay with BC Housing, who may have strategic land development opportunities that could be eligible for Community Housing Fund grants.

### *Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)*

BC Housing and City staff have briefly discussed the possibility of entering into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that would outline our shared commitment, roles, and responsibilities in relation to

shelter, supportive, and affordable housing development in Courtenay. Due to the recent changeover in leadership at BC Housing, engaging in MOUs with municipalities is temporarily on hold while new processes are developed, however staff continue to work together to pursue ways in which we can document our shared shelter and housing goals in Courtenay. Staff is continuing this discussion with BC Housing.

**POLICY ANALYSIS:**

The work with BC Housing aligns with Affordable Housing Objectives in the OCP, use of Housing Needs Assessment Report, and provincial legislation.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

As staff works through the various projects it will identify financial impacts that may impact the Affordable Housing Reserve Fund.

**ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS:**

This is an interdepartmental initiative and may impact other department workloads.

**STRATEGIC PRIORITIES REFERENCE:**

This initiative addresses the following strategic priorities and Housing for All:

- Affordable Housing - Explore approaches to develop affordable housing: Review potential of city property for housing partnerships with BC Housing

**PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:**

Public engagement may occur with each project.

**RECOMMENDATION:** THAT Council receive the BC Housing Update Briefing Note for information.

Prepared by: Marianne Wade, Director of Development Services

Concurrence: Geoff Garbutt, M.Pl., MCIP, RPP, City Manager (CAO)