



Community Engagement Report

Courtenay – 925 Braidwood Road & Ryan Road
Purpose-Built Shelter & Supportive Housing

June – July 2024

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INTRODUCTION

This report provides a summary of community engagement held in June and July 2024 regarding the proposed purpose-built shelter and supportive housing development at 925 Braidwood Road and Ryan Road in Courtenay, BC. The project would provide:

- Approximately 132 shelter spaces and connections to health supports
- Approximately 70 long-term supportive homes for local people experiencing or at risk of homelessness
- Services for residents such as cultural supports, 24/7 staff presence, wellness checks, life skills training, employment assistance and connection to other services

This report was submitted to Courtenay City Council on August 7, 2024.

BC Housing is also considering feedback received via these community engagement efforts to shape and improve the project designs along with technical, cultural and financial factors. We thank all project partners for their commitment and participation.

ANNOUNCEMENT – MARCH 2024

On March 28, 2024, the Province [announced](#) the purchase of land at 925 Braidwood Road in Courtenay to build a permanent, purpose-built shelter and separate supportive-housing building.

The Province announced that, through BC Housing, it contributed \$4 million to purchase the land through the Supportive Housing Fund. If approved by City Council, the site would be rezoned for the proposed uses.

ENGAGEMENT COMMUNICATIONS – JUNE/JULY 2024

Webpage

BC Housing launched a dedicated project webpage (letstalkhousingbc.ca/courtenay-925-braidwood-road) on June 21, 2024. On this page, we will continue to share the latest information on the project as well as community engagement opportunities.

The webpage also features a Questions and Comments prompt for the community to directly engage with the project team online. In total, 36 questions were submitted on the website from March 28 to August 15, 2024.

Questions and comments were also received through BC Housing's Community Relations email (communityrelations@bchousing.org). In total, 120 inquiries were received from March 28 (the date the purchase of land was announced) to July 24, 2024.

Neighbourhood Update Letter and Invitation – June 2024

On June 21, 2024, BC Housing sent an update by mail (Appendix A) to neighbours of within 200 m of the proposed project site at 925 Braidwood Road and Ryan Road (978 addresses). This letter included:

- Background information about the proposed project
- An invitation to a Neighbours Discussion Session and Community Open House (In-Person) on July 18, 2024.
- Information about the Discussion Guide and Feedback Form (see below)

Discussion Guide and Feedback Form

On June 21, 2024, a [Discussion Guide](#) with Feedback Form were posted on the project webpage. The Discussion Guide provided details on the development including timelines, opportunities for engagement, operator selection, site plan, and information on the purpose-built shelter and supportive housing, and parking and sustainability. The Feedback Form sought comments on the project's design elements between June 21 and July 24, 2024. In total:

- 55 feedback forms were submitted online
- 5 feedback forms were collected at City Hall, Comox Valley Regional District and K'omoks First Nation offices
- 15 feedback forms were collected at the July 18, 2024, Neighbours Discussion Session and Community Open House.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS – SUMMARY (JULY 2024)

Event Name and Date	Neighbours Discussion Session Thursday, July 18, 2024, 4:30 – 5:15 pm Native Sons Hall, 360 Cliffe Avenue, Courtenay, BC Community Open House Thursday, July 18, 2024, 5:30 – 7:30 pm Native Sons Hall, 360 Cliffe Avenue, Courtenay, BC
Organizers	BC Housing Project and Community Engagement Team: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jennifer Giesbrecht, Manager, Project and Community Engagement• Emily Kendy, Senior Communications Advisor, Project & Community Engagement• Alexia Diablo, Senior Communications Specialist, Project & Community Engagement

<p>Presenters</p>	<p>BC Housing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jennifer Fox, Regional Director • Sarah Smith, Director, Regional Development, Vancouver Island • Tara Schmidt, Senior Manager, Regional Development Services • Nicole Yang, Development Manager • Jennifer Giesbrecht, Manager, Project and Community Engagement • Stuart Andrie, Supportive Housing Advisor • Alexia Diablo, Senior Communications Specialist, Project & Community Engagement <p>Architect</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maris MacDonald, MacDonald Hagarty Architects Ltd. <p>City of Courtenay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marianne Wade, Director of Development Services <p>Facilitator</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amanda Pang, Lucent Quay Consulting
<p>Presentation Materials</p>	<p>Community Open House Display Boards Discussion Guide</p>
<p>Event Audience</p>	<p>Attendees included neighbours, local businesses and other interested community members</p>
<p>Number of Attendees</p>	<p>38 people attended the Neighbours Discussion Session (of 39 RSVPs) 69 people attended the Community Open House (of 91 RSVPs)</p>

WORKSHOP SESSIONS – SUMMARY (JUNE/ JULY 2024)

BC Housing met with K’omoks Nation Chief and Council and hosted three additional workshops in Courtenay on June 20 and July 19, 2024 to gather feedback and input on this project from local service providers and people with lived and living experience of homelessness.

Event Name and Date	<p>Braidwood Service Provider Design Workshop Thursday, June 20, 2024, 10:00 – 12:00 noon MacDonald Hagarty Architects Ltd. 1822 Unit E Comox Ave., Comox BC There were 12 attendees and included representatives from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• AVI Health & Community Services - Vancouver Island / K’omoks First Nation• BC Housing• Comox Valley Coalition to End Homelessness• Comox Valley Transition Society• Island Health• M’akola Housing Society• MacDonald Hagarty Architects• Pacific Swell Developments
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<p>Event Name and Date</p>	<p>Braidwood Service Provider Design Workshop Friday, July 19, 2024, 10:00 – 11:30 am Comox Valley Regional District Office, 770 Harmston Avenue, Courtenay, BC There were 21 attendees and included representatives from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AVI Health & Community Services - Vancouver Island • BC Housing • Community Living BC • Comox Valley Affordable Housing Society • Comox Valley Coalition to End Homelessness • Comox Valley Regional District • Comox Valley Transition Society • Dawn to Dawn Action on Homelessness Society • Island Health • RCMP • MacDonald Hagarty Architects • SOLID Outreach Society, Victoria • Wachiay Friendship Centre
<p>Event Name and Date</p>	<p>Braidwood Shelter Lived & Living Experience Workshop Friday, July 19, 2024, 12:30 – 1:30 pm Vancouver Island Regional Library, 300 6th Street, Courtenay, BC Attendees included representatives from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BC Housing • Comox Valley Coalition to End Homelessness • Comox Valley Transition Society • Dawn to Dawn Action on Homelessness Society • MacDonald Hagarty Architects • 30 attendees with lived experience

WHAT WE HEARD – SUMMARY

Tone

- Majority (61%) of feedback form comments were concerned
- Majority (53%) of online email inquiries were inquisitive/neutral
- Overall sentiment was concern

Topics

Safety

- Strong concern for safety and security for neighbours, seniors, children (young families, elementary school and daycare) and businesses in the area
- Concern that any unbuilt areas of the site would attract encampments
- Concern that this site would lead to current community issues of overflow and tenting
- Requests for accountability for the operator and BC Housing to ensure neighbourhood safety
- Interest in building security and cameras
- Concerns with potential substance use and crime in the neighbourhood
- Concerns with potential traffic accidents and disruptions around the site
- Concern for shelter guests' safety on Ryan Road

Operations

- Interest in general operations and site management details
- Interest in the future operator and questions about what supports would be available
- Questions comparing supports and services to be offered at the purpose-built shelter versus the current CONNECT Warming Centre
- Questions about the capacity of the proposed shelter versus the region's current homelessness population
- Desire for a qualified service provider and trained staff with access to mental health support
- Desire for overdose prevention measures to be implemented
- Desire for substance use treatment facilities
- Concerns about substance use and desire to prohibit substance use
- Concern that allowing substance use on site would negatively influence shelter residents who may wish to abstain
- Concerns about property maintenance and cleanliness (i.e., encampments, litter)
- Interest in noise reduction measures

Site Features and Design Elements

- Concerns that the proposed buildings are too large
- Comments that supportive housing and the shelter should not be beside each other
- Desire for supportive housing but not the shelter
- Desire to limit entrances/accesses to the property
- Desire for fencing around the property to separate it from the community and main roads
- Desire for emergency vehicle access to be on Ryan Road

- Suggestion to reduce parking spaces
- Interest for gathering spaces
- Desire for amenities such as garden, storage, walkways, lighting and garbage disposal
- Interest in removing sidewalks and proposed pedestrian/bike path connecting Braidwood Road and Ryan Road
- Desire to protect flowers and trees
- Suggestion to add park space
- What design elements are most important to you?
 - 70% privacy fences
 - 58% lighting around the building
 - 41% use of native, fruit bearing or medicinal plants
 - 40% seating and gathering areas
 - 26% water features
 - 26% community art
- **Design Elements Impacted by Engagement**
 - BC Housing will consider perimeter fencing that would be higher in certain areas, maximizing what is appropriate as per local bylaws.
 - BC Housing will consider removing a portion of this sidewalk.
 - BCH Housing will consider gating the driveway for controlled access in and out of the site.

Development

- Questions about the site selection and purchase process
- Questions about the rezoning process
- Sentiment that a different location should have been chosen
- Support for project but not the current location
- Support for the purpose-built shelter specifically

Engagement/process

- Concern about barriers to participation through Eventbrite (i.e., RSVP limits and online registration)
- Interest in more community engagement and additional information as it becomes available
- Request to see examples of similar projects around the Province
- Desire for engagement to be about whether the project is wanted, not about the design
- Interest in Naloxone training for community members

Other

- Concerns about potential reduction in nearby property values
- Concerns about taxes being used towards the land purchase and overall project
- Concerns about impacts to nearby businesses

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How is community safety considered in the design of this development?

- Safety of the residents, staff and surrounding community is always our top priority. One of the most important safety features for any project is 24/7 staffing by experienced professionals.
- BC Housing Design and Construction Standards considers Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) in all new purpose-built shelters and supportive housing. This approach includes an assessment to ensure CPTED features are included such as maximizing views of parking areas, entrances, sidewalks and other public spaces, and would include security features such as cameras, fob entry, fencing, gates and lighting.

How was this location selected?

- BC Housing purchased the three-acre site at 925 Braidwood Road in March 2024, in consultation with the City of Courtenay. Sites are preferred when located close to essential services and are large enough to provide separation from neighbouring uses with private fenced outdoor space.
- Access to community services and transit is key for people without homes, but so is feeling part of a neighbourhood. With a remote site, there is no access to services, no regular transit access and no integration with the community, which is essential for people who are working towards a healthy, stable life.

Why was the community not informed of the purchase prior to the announcement on March 28, 2024?

- We recognize that there are neighbours who would have preferred to be informed in advance of the site purchase. Unfortunately, real estate transactions cannot be confirmed until they are concluded. There are a number of reasons for this, but the most important is that it could potentially jeopardize the real estate transaction. This would inhibit our ability to address the housing mandate before us.
- Once a real estate transaction is finalized, we commit to engage with the community and provide opportunities for dialogue and conversation. This helps build partnerships and ensure successful community integration into neighbourhoods.

What are the plans for traffic mitigation for Braidwood Road and Ryan Road?

- A transportation consultant is reviewing the site, and vehicle estimates for the proposed development as part of our rezoning application.
- Parking will be provided on site to support staff, residents, visitors and community partners.
- Active transportation is supported through: bicycle parking and bicycle wash and repair station and a trail to the bus shelter on Ryan Road.

How would the shelter on Braidwood Road be different than the existing CONNECT shelter on Cliffe Avenue?

- The CONNECT Warming Centre at 685 Cliffe Avenue was not purpose-built for this use and is in a retrofitted commercial building that is aging. The new purpose-built shelter would be a purpose-built shelter that is thoughtfully and intentionally designed with neighbourhood integration in mind. This would include a variety of safety and security features for the benefit of the shelter guests as well as the surrounding community.

Who would manage this site?

- BC Housing would select a non-profit operator(s) for the shelter and the supportive housing building through a fair and public process. The operator(s) would be responsible for managing the buildings and the property and providing support services to the supportive housing residents and shelter guests.
- The operator(s) would reach out to the neighbourhood to foster positive relationships and open communication.
- We are aiming to have our operator(s) selected in 2024 – 2025.

How would the shelter and supportive housing buildings be staffed?

- One of the most important ways supportive housing and shelter can integrate safely in the neighbourhood is with good staffing.
- At this site, at least 2 staff would be onsite 24/7 to provide support for residents and manage the building.

What training does BC Housing require for operator staff?

- Staff training, as required by BC Housing, includes but is not limited to:
 - Crisis prevention training and/or de-escalation training and non-violent intervention
 - First Aid/CPR
 - Indigenous awareness training
 - Mental health first aid training
 - Domestic violence and safety planning
 - Safety for women training
 - Substance use awareness and safety training
 - LGBT2Q+ awareness training
 - Trauma-informed practice training
 - Staff self-care training

Would smoking or substance use be allowed outside on the property?

- This is up to the operator(s) to determine; however, the building would adhere to all health and bylaw restrictions for common areas, and as best practice, there is a designated outdoor smoking area.

Would this project contain an overdose prevention site (OPS)/inhalation site?

- Once an operator is identified we would have conversations with the operator, Island Health and City about the possibility of an OPS/ inhalation site..

Would alcohol and drugs be allowed?

- BC Housing's sites are operated based on the widely recognized and proven Housing First model. Residents are permitted to make their own choices regarding lifestyle. This includes the decision to abstain or use drugs/alcohol.
- We take a harm reduction approach, which means if shelter guests or supportive housing residents choose to use substances, support staff would work with each person to use safely.
- This is an important life-saving measure in the current toxic drug crisis. The goal of harm reduction is to prevent the negative consequences of substance use (including saving lives) and to improve health. Harm reduction acknowledges that many people may not be in a position to remain abstinent. This approach also meets people where they are at and provides an option to engage with peers, medical and social services in a non-judgmental way. Harm reduction approaches and programming are seen as a best practice for engaging with individuals with substance use issues.
- The operator would work with Island Health in determining best practices to promote overall resident safety and health. Staff are always available to support residents who are in various phases of substance use and/or their recovery journey.

Who is responsible for keeping the facility/area clean?

- The operator would be responsible for managing and maintaining the property itself. BC Housing and our operators are committed to being good neighbours and keeping property maintained, just as any other resident in the neighborhood would.
- Many of our housing sites also have Clean Teams, which employ supportive housing residents to do sweeps in the neighbourhood for any litter.

Would property values go down with supportive housing in this neighbourhood?

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



June 21, 2024

Neighbourhood Update

925 Braidwood and Ryan Road, Courtenay

Hello Neighbour,

We are writing to provide further updates from our letter in early May with details about the proposed purpose-built shelter and supportive housing development at 925 Braidwood Road and Ryan Road. This project is an important part of our continued effort to address the urgent need to offer safe, stable housing to people experiencing homelessness in Courtenay.

When vulnerable people have stable housing with a range of supports, they can access things like health care, wellness services and skills training to help rebuild their lives, which fosters healthy and safe communities for everyone.

Neighbours Discussion Session + Community Open House (In-Person)

As an immediate neighbour of 925 Braidwood and Ryan Road, we are inviting you to an in-person, 45-minute focused discussion about the planned development with the BC Housing project team. Neighbours can learn more and ask questions during this time. After our conversation, we'll open the doors to invite the broader community of Courtenay inside for a drop-in open house:

- **Date:** Thursday, July 18, 2024
- **Location:** Native Sons Hall, Grand Hall (upstairs) 360 Cliffe Avenue
- **Neighbours Discussion:** 4:30 p.m. – 5:15 p.m.
- **Open House:** 5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.
- **RSVP:** [braidwood-neighbours-discussion.eventbrite.ca](https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/braidwood-neighbours-discussion)

Community Feedback

We welcome feedback on design between now and **Wednesday, July 24, 2024**. While recognizing that major features of the building's design have been fixed due to the proposed use, programming and site orientation, input received will help shape the final project design and will be considered by BC Housing along with technical, cultural, and financial factors.

Read the discussion guide and fill out the form online by scanning the QR Code on the right, or visit: letstalkhousingbc.ca/courtenay-925-braidwood-road



You can also stop by reception at City Hall (830 Cliffe Ave, Courtenay) for a physical copy and leave the completed form behind for collection at this same location prior to July 24, 2024.

About the Project

BC Housing is working on a proposed purpose-built shelter and supportive housing at 925 Braidwood Road and Ryan Road. BC Housing purchased this land in March 2024, in consultation with the City.

The new shelter will offer more beds and include more indoor and outdoor communal spaces than the existing CONNECT shelter in Courtenay. Shelter guests will receive a range of supports, including connections to health care and mental health services. Because the shelter will be purpose-built, we are also able to include more safety and security features for the benefit of the guests as well as the surrounding community.

The supportive homes will be self-contained studios with supports provided on-site to help residents achieve and maintain housing stability. All residents pay rent. These homes create an opportunity for people to leave the streets and shelter system for safe and stable housing that will contribute to an improved quality of life.

Who will live here?

Supportive housing residents are typically single adults of all genders, including seniors and people with disabilities who need supports to maintain their housing. Indigenous people are over-represented among Courtenay's local homeless population. The 2023 Point-in-Time homeless count for the Comox Valley identified 272 people experiencing homelessness compared with 132 in 2020 (106% increase). According to this survey, more than 28% of people experiencing homelessness self-identified as having Indigenous ancestry. In response to this, the supportive housing program will prioritize Indigenous members first, followed by other equity-seeking individuals.

Questions?

In addition to the discussion guide and feedback form, you can also post questions via our project webpage at letstalkhousingbc.ca/courtenay-925-braidwood-road using the Q&A tool. The Q&A will be open until July 24, 2024.

We also welcome questions or comments at any time by email to: communityrelations@bchousing.org.

Sincerely,

BC Housing Project & Community Engagement

