

April 12, 2017

Range of social services and affordable housing for Campbell River

New housing programs and a sobering assessment centre will expand social services in Campbell River.

“Housing is the first priority for low-income families and for people at risk of being homeless, and the City has advocated for years for additional funding for affordable housing,” says Mayor Andy Adams. *“Campbell River’s Sustainable Official Community Plan aims to establish diverse and supportive housing options throughout the community, to ensure housing is available for people struggling with affordability, and, for an even more vulnerable group, to provide emergency shelter.”*

Thanks to a successful rental subsidy and placement program run by the John Howard Society of North Island, the number of people relying on the downtown emergency shelter and the Evergreen shelter has been significantly reduced, to the point where there’s now enough room at the Evergreen shelter for the local homeless population. The temporary downtown winter emergency shelter closed for the season March 31.

The John Howard Society program helped 324 people find or continue longer-term rental arrangements over the last nine months, in many cases, working with people who are not using the emergency or Evergreen shelter but need support due to crisis or transition.

“Our program targets services to individuals and families, and the rental subsidy program has had a huge impact,” says Wendy Richardson, executive director of the John Howard Society of North Island. *“Even without the rental subsidy funding, as a result of the strong working relationship we have developed with many local property managers, we have been able to help many individuals and supported numerous families to prevent homelessness. This success contributes to our mission: to provide programs and support to help children, youth and families lead safer, healthier lives.”*

Adding to the range of social services available, the City and Island Health are working with Vancouver Island Mental Health Society to establish a sobering and assessment centre downtown, anticipated to be open later this spring.

“Council has long advocated for a sobering assessment centre that will offer help for people struggling with substance abuse and addiction, a valuable addition to the available community services downtown,” says Councillor Ron Kerr, who has worked closely with local social service agencies. *“We are pleased to confirm the facility operator will develop a neighbourhood agreement with local business and service programs to outline the process of dealing with any concerns that may arise from the program.”*

In response to local demand for affordable housing, the Province announced April 7 that it will invest \$5.1 million to purchase and renovate the former Travelodge at 340 South Island Hwy. M’akola Housing Society will own and operate the building consisting of 40 affordable housing units. This affordable housing project is for singles and couples whose income falls within the housing income limits for Campbell River. This building will not operate as a shelter or supportive housing, and units will not be available for families with children.

“We will work with the City to develop a framework to ensure building operations complement the inclusive vision of the City’s Sustainable Official Community Plan,” says Kevin Albers, Chief Executive Officer of M’akola Housing Society. *“We will also meet with residents in the neighbouring condominiums over the next few weeks to review our plans and will be keeping them updated as to our progress.”*

“It’s important to remember that these separate programs support a wide range of needs and help secure longer-term, local solutions for people in Campbell River. The City of Campbell River will continue to work to ensure people in need have access to housing support and related social services,” the Mayor adds. *“We greatly appreciate the support of BC Housing, Island Health, M’akola Housing Society, the John Howard Society of North Island and the many other local agencies who continue to provide services to alleviate homelessness. Pulling together, Campbell River is offering more affordable housing, which multiple agencies have identified as the key to effective change and lasting improvement.”*



Updates on related social services:

- The Grassroots Kind Hearts dinner program will be permitted to continue at the location next to the downtown fire hall until end of May 2017.
- City staff continue to facilitate meetings between Grassroots Kind Hearts and other agencies to help them determine the best location for future meal service.
- The Salvation Army continues to offer a breakfast and lunch program for homeless people.
- The City is considering future options for the emergency shelter.

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