

HEART & HEARTH MOU

What is HEART & HEARTH?

- BC Housing has two new provincial programs, called [HEART and HEARTH](#):
 - Homeless Encampment Action Response Teams (HEART)
 - Homeless Encampment Action Response Temporary Housing (HEARTH)
- Through the HEART program, community partners will be coordinated by BC Housing to develop and implement encampment response plans and prevention strategies that address the varied needs of people living outdoors.
- The HEARTH program is a new provincial fund that supports emergency housing, shelter options, and immediate coordinated supports to support the encampment response plans and assist people in encampments or sheltering in public spaces to come inside, and access temporary or permanent housing options that fit their needs.
- Both the HEART and HEARTH programs are part of Belonging in BC, the Province’s plan to prevent and reduce homelessness. The plan will also add 3,900 new supportive housing units, 240 complex-care spaces and 3,000 supported rent supplements provincewide.

Why is this MOU necessary?

- We feel it’s important to let the public know that the Province and the City are committed to working together to find shelter and housing options for people sheltering outdoors, and to do everything we can to address encampments in our community.
- This MOU outlines each agency’s roles and responsibilities towards creating indoor spaces and housing with support services.
- To read the MOU, visit: <http://news.gov.bc.ca/files/NanaimoHEARTandHEARTH.pdf>

Why focus on people sheltering in encampments?

- People shelter in encampments when they have no other options, but encampments can become unsafe for them and others — with fire safety and public health issues,

extreme weather, crime, and exploitation of vulnerable people, such as women and youth.

- We are committed to working with local partners to develop shelter and housing capacity to meet the needs of as many people as possible who are sheltering outside in Nanaimo.
- To meet this commitment, BC Housing, is working with the City to rapidly create new temporary transitional housing and shelter options that will be funded through the HEARTH program.
- People moving into these new homes will be coming mainly from shelters where they have already been assessed for their support needs.
- This will ensure residents are individually matched with the support services they need. This is critical to ensuring residents will be set up for success in their new homes and more likely to remain housed.
- Once people move into the new homes, this will free up shelter spaces to be offered to people in encampments.
- We expect more projects to be announced before spring 2024.

How will HEART and HEARTH programs help manage encampments and transition people into more stable housing?

- Through the HEART program, BC Housing will be engaging with community partners to develop a coordinated outreach approach to assess people in encampments for their support needs and to offer spaces for people to move indoors, as they become available. Responding to encampments requires a range of housing options, both interim and long-term.
- The HEARTH program gives us the tools to quickly establish interim housing, to ensure people have a safe place to move into while permanent housing is developed.

When will the HEART program be up and running in Nanaimo?

- Our goal is to establish new supportive housing and shelter options as soon as possible.
- BC Housing, local outreach providers and other community partners are already doing significant and valuable outreach work on the ground to support people experiencing homelessness in Nanaimo.
- BC Housing is hiring dedicated staff to support the coordination of support services and offers of indoor spaces as new sites open.
- This work will also involve partnering with other provincial ministries, healthcare agencies, outreach workers and the city.

Who will be part of the HEART program in Nanaimo?

- BC Housing and Ministry partners have already begun reaching out to key stakeholders, inviting them to be part of the HEART working group/strategic table and/or operational team.
- This will include other provincial ministries, health care agencies, outreach workers and the city.

Can you outline the good neighbour parameters expected to be followed by operators for these temporary housing sites?

- BC Housing's priority is providing a safe environment for staff, residents, and the surrounding community. Similar to other supportive housing sites, these temporary housing developments will have staff on-site 24 hours a day, seven days a week to ensure that residents are supported and community concerns can be addressed in a timely manner.
- The operator will also work to develop positive relationships with their neighbors by providing designated contact information, supporting programs such as clean teams, and engaging neighbourhoods in building collaborative relationships.

250 Terminal Ave. (Newcastle Place)

Wasn't this site planned for permanent homes?

- Newcastle Place is a 78-unit temporary workforce housing that opened in 2019. It was one of two temporary sites, along with Nikao at 2060 Labieux Rd., that was constructed to respond to an encampment.
- BC Housing owns the land and is proposing to build approximately 50 new permanent purpose-built homes with supports. In a future phase, approximately 40 new affordable rental homes for families, seniors and people with disabilities will be built on a portion of the site.
- This location is currently undergoing rezoning. We'll be providing engagement opportunities to neighbours and the community on updates regarding the permanent homes planned here in coming weeks.
- Once the site is rezoned, it may take from 12 to 18 months to receive the building permits so that construction can begin. This is why we have opted to keep part of the temporary housing open.

We understood there was a firm commitment from BC Housing that the units would not be re-occupied after the move to Prideaux.

- Newcastle Place was expected to close once new purpose-built supportive housing in the community opened, specifically 285 Prideaux St. However, homelessness in Nanaimo has continued to grow.
- There is an opportunity to keep approximately 50 units open under HEARTH to support people transitioning from shelters to permanent housing.

- To meet the urgent needs of the community, Newcastle Place at 250 Terminal Ave will continue operation under HEARTH until another appropriate housing option is available or construction can begin on permanent purpose-built supportive homes, whichever comes first.

Why are you only keeping 50 out of 78 units open?

- To respond to neighbourhood concerns, address building safety, and ensure the site size is manageable for the operator, only 50 units of the total 78 units will remain open.
- All remaining 49 of the current residents of the workforce housing at Newcastle Place will move to Nanaimo's newest supportive housing building, Cornerstone at 285 Prideaux St. in the coming weeks.
- After residents move, the units at Newcastle Place will be cleaned and refurbished as needed. Fifty of the units will then be re-opened to bring others experiencing homelessness in the community indoors, with Island Crisis Care Society continuing to operate the site.
- BC Housing will be using the Coordinated Access & Assessment (CAA) table to take referrals for these spaces. People who have been staying long-term in overnight shelters will be prioritized.

When will new residents move into Newcastle Place?

- People in shelters will be able to move to this site once current residents move to new permanent supportive housing at 285 Prideaux St. and any necessary repairs to the units have been made.

Who will operate the HEARTH site here, and how will residents be selected?

- Newcastle Place will continue to be operated by Island Crisis Care Society which has been managing the site since 2019.
- BC Housing will be using the Coordinated Access & Assessment (CAA) table to take referrals for these spaces. People who have been staying long-term in overnight shelters will be prioritized.

How will safety and security be managed?

BC Housing, the operator Island Crisis Care Society and residents of Newcastle Place are all committed to being good neighbours.

- Newcastle Place has been in place for more than five years and there has been very little need for dedicated security in recent years.
- The safety of residents, staff and the surrounding community is our priority. Safety and security features include:
 - 24/7 staffing – this is the most important security feature, both for residents and the community. The site is staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to

provide support for residents 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 residents will help maintain cleanliness.
- Residents will sign and be expected to abide by a Program Agreement that addresses expectations about appropriate and respectful behaviour.
- When Newcastle Place reopens under HEARTH, the people moving in will be coming from long-term stays in shelters. They will be offered housing spaces using our Coordinated Access and Assessment (CAA) process (see above).
- There will be an extra staff member on site during the overnight period, for a total of three people. Additional staff will be on site during the day. These staff would provide support to residents, and monitor the area and guest, to ensure that residents are supported, and community concerns can be addressed in a timely manner.
- If concerns or problems occur with specific residents on the property, the operator will work with them and police to find solutions.

Is there a 24/hr contact number to use?

- Key contacts are available on the *Who to Call / When to Call* info sheet provided to neighbours and available on BC Housing's web page at: letstalkhousingbc.ca/nanaimo-250-terminal-ave.
- BC Housing and Island Crisis Care Society are committed to working with neighbours to address any issues that may arise at Newcastle Place. We also commit to openly share information about the upcoming rezoning of this site for permanent, purpose-built supportive and affordable housing.
- Neighbours have been sent a *Who to Call / When to Call* sheet with direct contact information. This sheet is also available on BC Housing's Let's Talk webpage for the project.
- Neighbours can also email communityrelations@bchousing.org at any time.

Does this site require rezoning?

- No. This site was granted Crown Immunity by the Province which permits continued use as temporary transitional housing. Crown Immunity, or S.14(2) of the Interpretation Act, allows land to be used by the Province regardless of any enactment through local government, including zoning bylaws.

What supports will be available at Newcastle Place?

- People living at Newcastle Place will continue to have access to support services, such as daily meals, 24/7 staffing, access to skills training, and support navigating the housing system.
- The operator, Island Crisis Care Society, also offers a pre-employment and employment skills training and work placement program, Project Rise. The program is for people who have experienced homelessness but are ready to re-integrate more

fully into independence, community life and employment. Residents of Newcastle Place will be able to take part in this program if they wish.

How long will these units remain open?

- These units will remain open under HEARTH until another appropriate housing option is available or construction can begin on the permanent supportive housing at the site.

Where can I provide feedback/ask questions?

- Please email communityrelations@bchousing.org.

1300 Island Highway HEARTH site

What is happening at 1300 Island Highway?

- BC Housing has secured a lease of land at 1300 Island Highway for temporarily transitional housing.
- 50 temporary beds are anticipated to be funded through the HEARTH program.
- Learn more at: letstalkhousingbc.ca/nanaimo-1300-island-hwy-south.

Who will operate the site?

- BC Housing issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) in late 2023 to identify potential operators for Homeless Encampment Action Response Temporary Housing (HEARTH) sites in Nanaimo. We will share publicly who the operator for the 1300 Island Hwy. site will be once they have been selected.

Will supports be available at this site?

- Yes, guests will have access to support services, such as daily meals, 24/7 staffing, access to skills training, and support navigating the housing system.

Does this site require rezoning

- No; the zoning and OCP supports the proposed use. Due to the urgent need in the community, Crown Immunity has been granted by the Province, supported by the City and BC Housing for the municipal permits, and so will immediately start construction.
- Crown Immunity, or S.14(2) of the Interpretation Act, allows land to be used by the Province regardless of any enactment through local government, including zoning bylaws.

When will the prefabricated units be operational?

- Based on similar projects in other communities, we anticipate the new units at 1300 Island Hwy. to be operational by mid- to late 2024.

How long will these structures be in place?

- Project details are still being finalized, but these sleeping units are meant to be temporary and will be in place for a minimum of three years.
- BC Housing continues to work with the City of Nanaimo and community partners on additional permanent housing solutions for people experiencing homelessness.