

NO: **R186**

COUNCIL DATE: **October 5, 2009**

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## REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: **Mayor & Council** DATE: **October 5, 2009**  
FROM: **General Manager, Planning and Development** FILE: **7909-0022-00**  
SUBJECT: **Proposed Timber Grove Supportive Housing Project at 13922 - 101 Avenue  
Development Application No. 7909-0022-00  
Proposed Adjustments Based on Concerns Raised During the Public Hearing**

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## RECOMMENDATION

The Planning and Development Department recommends that Council:

1. Receive this report as information;
2. Grant Third Reading to Rezoning By-law No. 16967 rezoning a portion of the lot at 13922 - 101 Avenue (Appendix I) from Single Family Residential Zone (RF) to Comprehensive Development Zone (CD) on the following conditions:
  - a. That residents in Timber Grove be limited to:
    - i. seniors who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness, in need of affordable supported housing, and who currently reside or whose origins are in Surrey; or
    - ii. people with disabilities who can live independently and qualify for a disability pension or are eligible for the disability tax credit;
  - b. That persons with either of the following not be eligible for residence in Timber Grove:
    - i. active substance abuse addictions or a history of instability with respect to substance abuse; or
    - ii. a criminal conviction related to a violent offence;
  - c. That the Timber Grove Resident Selection Advisory Committee include in addition to BC Housing and Coast Mental Health, a representative from each of the Fraser Health Authority, the Surrey Homelessness and Housing Task Force, other non-profit community agencies that provide services to the homeless, and the RCMP to assist in selecting residents for Timber Grove;
  - d. That a Neighbourhood Advisory Committee be established for Timber Grove prior to occupancy of the project to ensure that any community concerns regarding the operation of Timber Grove are understood and addressed in a timely manner; and

- e. That the replacement trees along the western portion of the site be significantly upsized to assist in restoring an urban forest condition on this side of the site as quickly as possible after completion of construction.

## INTENT

The purpose of this report is to provide information about actions that have been taken to address concerns raised by area residents at the Public Hearing on July 13, 2009, with respect to the proposed Timber Grove supportive housing project and to request Council consideration of Third Reading of the related rezoning by-law subject to several recommended conditions.

## BACKGROUND

On February 5, 2009, BC Housing applied to rezone a portion of the lot at 13922 - 101 Avenue from Single Family Residential Zone (RF) to Comprehensive Development Zone (CD) to permit the development of a three-storey apartment building containing 52 units of supportive housing for people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless (Appendix I). The Planning Report with respect to the project was presented to Council at the Regular Council – Land Use Meeting on June 29, 2009 and the Public Hearing with respect to the related Rezoning By-law No. 16967 was held on July 13, 2009. At the Public Hearing a significant number of area residents expressed opposition to the proposal and consideration of Third Reading of the Rezoning By-law was deferred.

At the July 27, 2009 Regular Council – Public Hearing Meeting, Council passed the following resolution [R09-1399]:

*"That Council:*

- 1. Defer consideration of Third Reading of Rezoning By-law No. 16967 related to Development Application No. 7909-0022-00: and*
- 2. Direct staff to continue discussions with BC Housing regarding the project in consideration of the comments and concerns raised during the Public Hearing and provide a report to Council complete with recommendations based on the outcome of those discussions."*

## DISCUSSION

At the July 13, 2009 Public Hearing a number of area residents spoke against the proposed Timber Grove project, outlining a number of issues and concerns. Petitions were also submitted to Council opposing the proposed project. Many of the concerns and issues raised by area residents were similar to those that were raised in response to the pre-notification letter, the development proposal sign and at the Public Information Meeting held by the applicant and documented in the June 29, 2009 Planning Report

The concerns can be grouped into six categories, as follows:

1. The operation of the facility;
2. Staffing of the facility;
3. The process by which residents of the facility are selected;
4. The characteristics of residents of the facility;

5. Safety and security of area residents and property; and
6. Removal of trees and forested area.

As directed by Council, staff has been in discussions with BC Housing and Coast Mental Health, the selected operator for Timber Grove, to identify ways to respond to the comments and concerns raised by the area residents. As a result of these discussions, a number of modifications have been proposed, as outlined below.

### **Operation of the Facility**

Comments received from area residents indicate that there is some misunderstanding about the operation of Timber Grove; more specifically, the difference between "supportive housing" and "emergency shelters". At the Public Hearing there were a number of speakers comparing the proposed Timber Grove facility to the "heat" shelter in Downtown Vancouver.

The report, *Housing Matters BC: A Strategy for British Columbia*, provides information about a housing continuum (attached as Appendix II). While the continuum indicates that both "emergency shelter and housing for the homeless" and "transitional, supported and assisted living" require a high or moderate level of support services, they represent entirely different stages of the housing continuum.

"Emergency shelters and housing for the homeless" provide people who have no permanent home with a temporary place to sleep. Some shelters, such as the 40-bed Gateway/Front Room shelter in City Centre have beds available on a daily check-in/check-out basis. Other shelters provide homeless women and their children with a safe place to stay while more permanent housing is secured, with stays generally being up to 30 days.

In contrast, according to *Housing Matters BC*, "transitional, supported and assisted living" housing provides stable housing to individuals who have special housing needs or those with low incomes who require support services in order to live independently in the community. This group includes frail seniors, people with mental illness or physical disabilities, those with drug and alcohol addictions, women with their children fleeing violence, and the homeless or those at risk of homelessness. According to the Province's *Housing Matters BC* document, "the goal is to appropriately assess an applicant's housing and support needs to ensure a successful match both with housing and support services".

Timber Grove is not an emergency shelter. It is a supportive housing project that will provide its residents with stable housing, or their own home. It will be operated under the terms and conditions of the Residential Tenancy Act, such that, similar to other tenants, residents of Timber Grove will:

- sign a residential tenancy agreement for their unit;
- pay rent, which, for most tenants, will likely come from an income assistance payment or pension;
- have no time limit on their length of tenancy; and
- be evicted from the facility for contravention of the tenancy agreement or for non-payment of rent or for disruptive behaviour.

Residents of Timber Grove will be expected to live independently, buy their own food, cook their own meals, do their own laundry and keep their premises neat and tidy. Residents will be free to seek employment and are able to have visitors to their apartments.

Coast Mental Health has been selected by BC Housing to operate Timber Grove. Currently Coast Mental Health provides supportive housing to more than 700 people in 40 different homes and apartments throughout Metro Vancouver.

The average tenancy for a resident in other similar Coast Mental Health facilities is at least two years. The older the resident, the greater the likelihood that the tenancy of the resident will extend well beyond two years.

On-site support services will be available for the residents and will include: regular meal service, peer support services, employment preparation and placement, tenant participation in building and grounds maintenance, the Clean Start program and case management and medical management assistance.

Tenants may also require additional support services, including physical and mental health services, which they will access off-site. The role of Coast Mental Health staff will be to assist in connecting residents to the services that they need, and ensuring that they maintain successful connections with these off-site service providers.

### **Staffing of the Facility**

Area residents raised concerns about the staffing of Timber Grove, indicating that the proposed number of staff was insufficient to manage and support the residents. In response, Coast Mental Health has provided the City with a proposed staffing schedule for the Timber Grove facility which is attached as Appendix III.

In total, Timber Grove will have eight full-time staff positions, including a Program Coordinator, six Community Mental Health Workers and a resident building operator. All of these staff positions will be funded by BC Housing. The Program Coordinator and Community Mental Health Workers will have post-secondary training in community mental health, residential care or a related discipline. The Program Coordinator will have at least a Bachelor's level degree, while the Community Mental Health Workers will generally have at least college-level certification.

A major change in the proposed staffing of the facility that has occurred, following comments made at the Public Hearing, is that Coast Mental Health has made the decision to hire a Resident Building Caretaker who will reside at the facility full-time in one of the studio apartment units.

Further, Coast Mental Health is now proposing to staff the facility 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Staffing will be split into three shifts; 7 a.m. to 3 p.m., 3 p.m. to 11 p.m. and 11 p.m. to 7 a.m. Coast Mental Health is proposing to have two staff members on-site during the 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. shift and the 3 p.m. to 11 p.m. shift. One staff member will be on-site each night from 11 p.m. to 7 a.m. every night of the week, except for Wednesday nights when the Resident Building Caretaker will be responsible for the night shift. Staff members on-site during the night shift will respond to any concerns or issues that may arise among the residents.

In addition to the on-site staff resources, staff at Timber Grove will have access to Coast Mental Health's Clinical Manager on a 24-hour 7 days-a-week basis. This Manager is available to respond to and offer advice on any medical or psychiatric emergencies that occur in Coast Mental Health facilities. Coast Mental Health also has a 24-hour property maintenance call-line to address emergencies with respect to the building or building maintenance.

The level of staffing being proposed for Timber Grove meets or exceeds the staffing levels in other BC Housing-funded supportive housing facilities, similar to Timber Grove.

### **Resident Selection**

Comments received from area residents indicate that they have concerns about how residents will be selected for Timber Grove. They fear that residents that are inappropriate, or unable to live in a residential area without having a negative impact on the neighbourhood, will reside in the project.

BC Housing and Coast Mental Health have provided further details about how the selection process for Timber Grove will work. In response to the neighbourhood concerns, they have proposed adding an additional step to the resident selection process that will involve other community stakeholders in the selection process, further ensuring that operation of Timber Grove will not detract from the quality of the neighbourhood.

There will be three steps involved in the resident selection process for Timber Grove as described below.

#### ***Step 1 – BC Housing***

- BC Housing maintains a centralized, Provincial Housing Registry of applicants in search of subsidized housing. The Registry allows applicants to submit one application form for multiple buildings, and supplies housing providers who are Housing Registry members, with a current, centralized database of applicant information. Coast Mental Health is a member of the Provincial Housing Registry;
- The Housing Registry is managed by a Council that represents housing providers including the BC Non-Profit Housing Association, Co-operative Housing Federation of BC, community agencies, and BC Housing. BC Housing maintains the Housing Registry;
- The Housing Registry application process includes a Supplemental Application Form for people who are homeless, fleeing domestic violence or have a serious health condition that is affected by current housing. This Form collects information from a third-party who can verify an applicant's current housing situation or health condition. BC Housing has a list of who can qualify as a third-party verifier which includes a shelter or outreach worker, health care professional or police officer. A relative of the applicant is not an accepted third-party verifier. BC Housing uses the information from the Supplemental Application Form to: determine eligibility; assess housing need; and determine the housing developments that suit an applicant's needs;
- When a vacancy is available in any BC Housing project, a list of suitable applicants is generated from the Housing Registry; and
- In the case of Timber Grove, it is anticipated that the Housing Registry will provide a list of several hundred people from which suitable candidates will be selected for the 51 new units.

### ***Step 2 – Timber Grove Resident Selection Advisory Committee***

- To assist in the selection of residents for Timber Grove, Coast Mental Health has proposed establishing a Timber Grove Resident Selection Advisory Committee. The Selection Advisory Committee will include a representative from each of the following:
  - BC Housing;
  - Coast Mental Health (Timber Grove operator);
  - Fraser Health Authority;
  - the Surrey Homelessness and Housing Task Force;
  - other non-profit community agencies that provide services to the homeless; and
  - the RCMP;
- The role of the Timber Grove Resident Selection Advisory Community will be to advise Coast Mental Health on the selection of tenants. The review of applicants by Committee members will provide another step in ensuring that an appropriate match is made between the housing and support provided at Timber Grove and the needs of the residents to ensure the project does not detract from the neighbourhood; and
- For privacy reasons, local residents will not be involved in the process of reviewing individual applications. However, a Neighbourhood Advisory Committee, as discussed below, will provide the opportunity for local resident consultation on an on-going basis with the operation of Timber Grove.

### ***Step 3 – Coast Mental Health***

- Coast Mental Health will be responsible for making the final decision on the selection of tenants. Coast's Supported Housing Program – Policy and Procedures states that "the careful selection of stable tenants is of primary importance";
- Once the Selection Committee has determined that an applicant is suitable for Timber Grove, Coast Mental Health has their own application and assessment procedures that include an interview with each applicant. The interview assists Coast Mental Health in assessing the appropriateness of the applicant, as well as providing the applicant with the opportunity to decide whether or not they wish to live in the facility; and
- The Timber Grove residents will be selected at least two months prior to the facility opening and the residents moving in. This will provide Coast Mental Health with an opportunity to begin working with the residents before they actually move into the building.

### **Resident Profile**

At the Public Hearing, speakers raised concerns over the potential profile of prospective tenants of Timber Grove, such as involvement in the drug trade.

In response to these comments and concerns, Coast Mental Health and BC Housing have confirmed that the target tenant population does not involve those who may be involved in the street drug trade. The tenants of this project will be an older population. To this end, it is being proposed that the general tenant profile be as follows and reflected in the Housing Agreement:

- seniors who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, in need of affordable supported housing, and who currently reside or whose origins are in Surrey; or
- people with disabilities who can live independently and qualify for a disability pension, or are eligible for the disability tax credit.

Tenants who meet the above criteria from the BC Housing Registry will be considered by the Selection Advisory Committee and Coast Mental Health

People that fall within the following categories will not be eligible for residency at Timber Grove and this will be noted in the Housing Agreement:

- individuals with active substance abuse addictions or a history of instability with respect to substance abuse; or
- individuals with a criminal conviction for a violent offence.

Residents of Timber Grove will also have to meet Coast Mental Health's other general eligibility criteria which includes that a person must:

- be capable of living independently without constant supervision;
- demonstrate ability to self-manage medications;
- voluntarily participate and be willing to comply with the program's requirements; and
- be deemed to be in financial need and require a rental subsidy.

### **Safety and Security of Area Residents and Property**

Neighbours of the proposed Timber Grove project raised concerns about the impact of Timber Grove on the safety and security of their neighbourhood. As outlined above, BC Housing and Coast Mental Health have agreed to make significant changes to the resident profile of Timber Grove. They are now proposing that it house only seniors, and exclude people with problematic addiction issues or a history of violence.

Coast Mental Health documents all incidents that occur in their supported housing projects. Tracking and following-up on incidents is a condition of maintaining the agency's Accreditation Canada status. Over the past five years, Coast Mental Health's Supported Housing Program did not have a record of any incident or accident that involved neighbours being impacted by a resident of a Coast Mental Health-operated facility. Coast Mental Health currently operates 40+ facilities that house 700+ individuals.

### **Neighbourhood Advisory Committee**

To proactively address any neighbourhood concerns that may arise with respect to the operation of Timber Grove, Coast Mental Health will establish a Neighbourhood Advisory Committee for Timber Grove. The Neighbourhood Advisory Committee will provide a forum for Coast Mental Health, community stakeholders such as the RCMP, Downtown Surrey BIA, and area residents to exchange information, discuss any concerns that may arise and arrive at constructive solutions to these concerns.

## Removal of Trees

To accommodate the proposed three-storey Timber Grove apartment building and to permit the construction of the building most of the trees on the northerly part of the site will be removed. Forty-nine (49) replacement trees are to be planted to compensate for the trees being removed. The replacement trees will be fast growing trees such as Western Red Cedar. This will help to reinstate the existing tree cover as quickly as possible. In addition to planting fast-growing trees, the landscaping plans will be adjusted to include upsized replacement trees so that the landscape buffering to the west is more substantial at the time that the project construction is completed.

## CONCLUSION

Concerns raised at the Public Hearing for the Timber Grove project related primarily to:

- the operation of the facility;
- staffing levels on a 24 hours a day by 7 days a week basis;
- tenant selection process;
- characteristics of residents;
- safety and security of the neighbourhood; and
- removal of trees and forested area on the site.

BC Housing and Coast Mental Health have responded to these concerns by providing the City with additional clarification and information and modifying the proposal such that:

- Eligibility for residence in Timber Grove will be limited to:
  - seniors who or homeless or at-risk of homelessness, in need of affordable supported housing, and who currently reside or whose origins are in Surrey; or
  - people with disabilities who can live independently and qualify for a disability pension, or are eligible for the disability tax credit.
- It will exclude people with:
  - active substance abuse addictions or a history of instability with respect to substance abuse; or
  - a criminal conviction for a violent offence.
- Coast Mental Health, BC Housing, the Fraser Health Authority, the Surrey Homelessness and Housing Task Force, other non-profit community service agencies and the Surrey RCMP will participate in a Timber Grove Resident Selection Advisory Committee; and
- Coast Mental Health will establish a Neighbourhood Advisory Committee for Timber Grove that will meet regularly to ensure that neighbourhood concerns that arise are addressed expediently

Timber Grove represents a solution to addressing homelessness in Surrey. It responds to recommendations of the Plan for the Social Well-Being of Surrey Residents that identified significant gaps in the social housing continuum in Surrey.

Given the urgent need for supportive housing for people who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness, the significant modifications to the tenant eligibility criteria, and the additional actions that will be undertaken to ensure that the community is engaged in the project, it is recommended that Council:



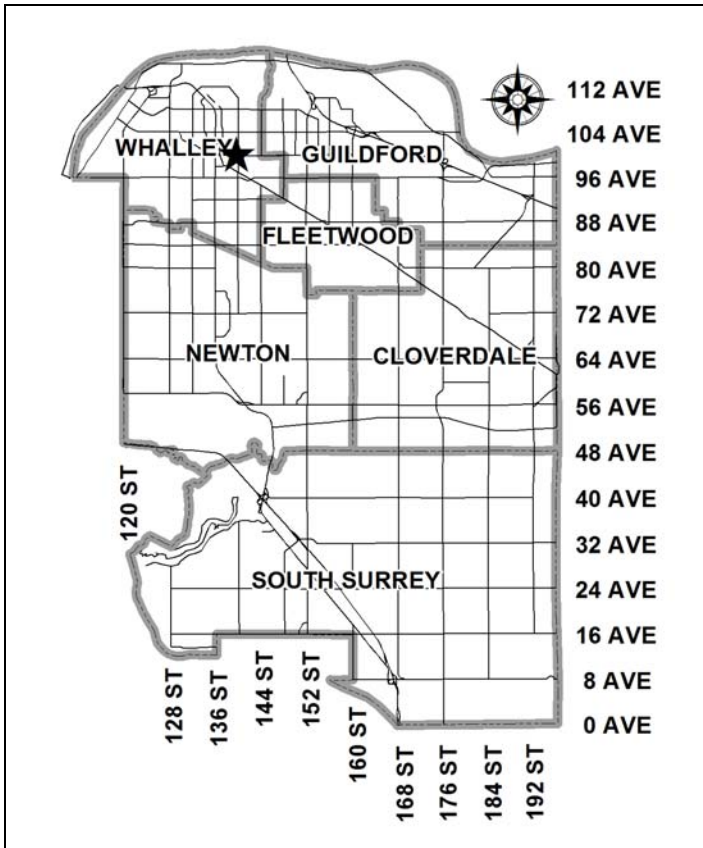
1. Grant Third Reading to Rezoning By-law No. 16967 rezoning a portion of the lot at 13922 - 101 Avenue from RF to CD subject to the following conditions related to the completed project:
  - a. That residents in Timber Grove be limited to:
    - i. seniors who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness, in need of affordable supported housing, and who currently reside or whose origins are in Surrey; or
    - ii. people with disabilities who can live independently and qualify for a disability pension or are eligible for the disability tax credit;
  - b. That persons with either of the following not be eligible for residence in Timber Grove:
    - i. active substance abuse addictions or a history of instability with respect to substance abuse; or
    - ii. a criminal conviction for a violent offence;
  - c. That the Timber Grove Resident Selection Advisory Committee include in addition to BC Housing and Coast Mental Health, a representative from each of the Fraser Health Authority, the Surrey Homelessness and Housing Task Force, other non-profit community agencies that provide services to the homeless, and the RCMP to assist in selecting residents for Timber Grove; and
  - d. That a Neighbourhood Advisory Committee be established prior to the occupancy of Timber Grove to ensure that any community concerns regarding the operation of Timber Grove are understood and addressed in a timely manner; and
  - e. That the replacement trees along the western portion of the site be significantly upsized to assist in restoring an urban forest condition on this side of the site as quickly as possible after completion of construction.

*Original signed by*  
Jean Lamontagne  
General Manager,  
Planning and Development

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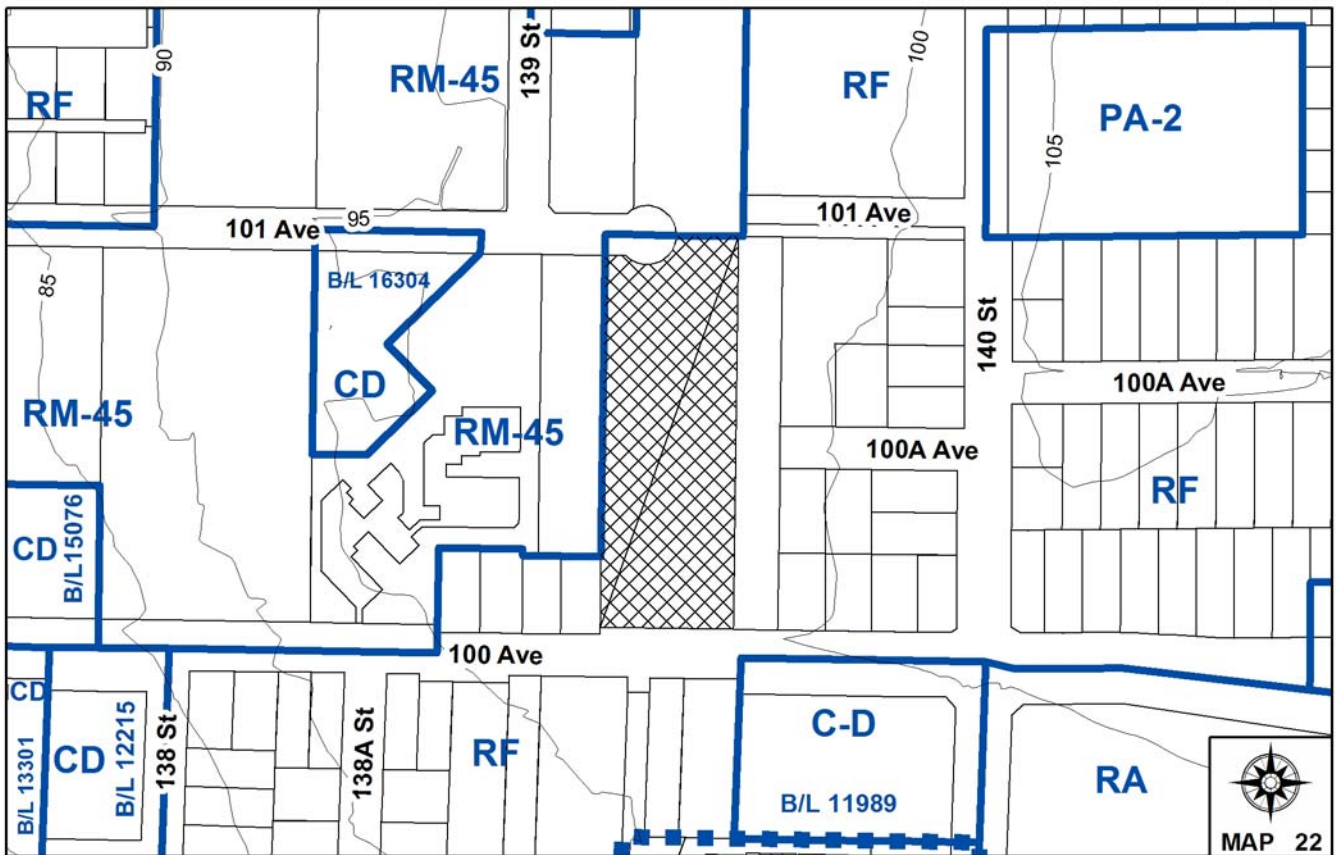
Attachments:

Appendix I    Location Map  
Appendix II    Housing Continuum  
Appendix III    Proposed Staffing

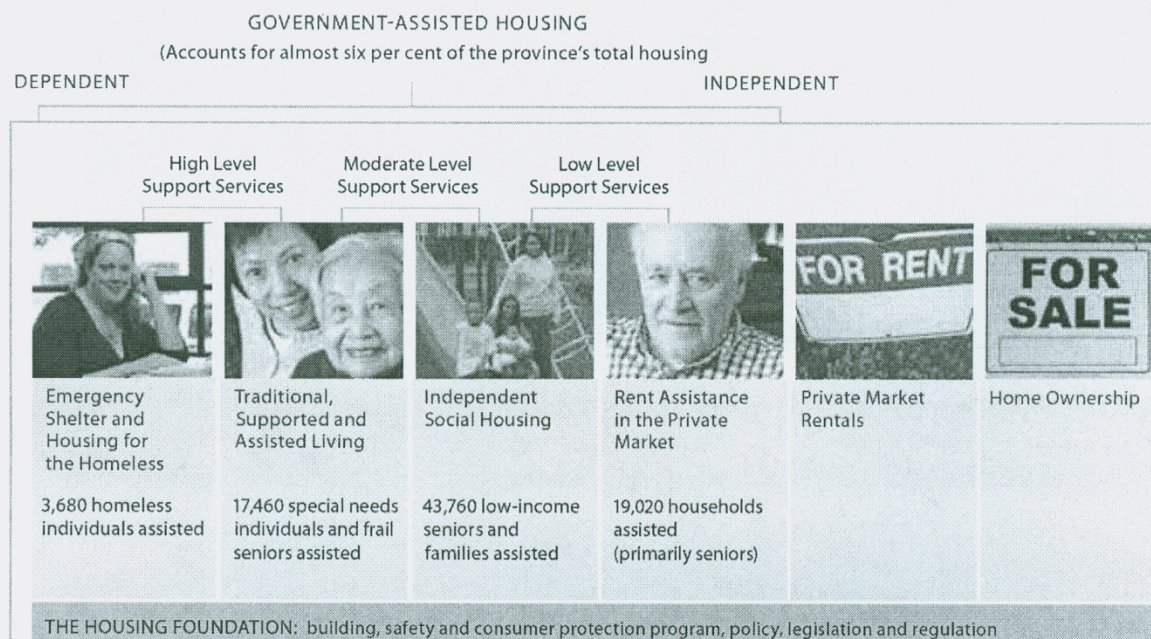


PROPOSED TIMBER GROVE SUPPORTIVE HOUSING SITE

Portion of 13922 - 101 Avenue



## HOUSING CONTINUUM



To address housing need, the Province will provide emergency shelters and homeless outreach, transitional and supportive subsidized housing, and housing allowances to bridge the affordability gap in private rental housing.

The Province will better integrate housing with health and social support services, advance self-sufficiency programs for tenants in subsidized housing and improve access to affordable rental housing in the private rental market – all of which will ultimately better meet the housing needs of more British Columbians.

To help people enter the housing market and to assist in the cost of homeownership, the Province has made improvements to the First Time Home Buyers' Property Transfer Tax Exemption and the Home Owner Grant, which goes to more than 60 per cent of British Columbians who own their own home.

Steps are also underway to modernize the building safety system, improve consumer protection for homebuyers, enhance the residential tenancy system, and increase professionalism in the residential construction industry.

This Strategy outlines the provincial government's response to the challenges of a changing housing environment. It commits to existing programs that have proven successful, and to new approaches to meet the housing needs of British Columbians, while working within budgetary constraints.

*Source: Housing Matters BC – A Housing Strategy for British Columbia, Province of British Columbia, 2006.*

Date															
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