



City of New Westminster

Report to Council

To: New Westminster City Council
in Regular Council

Meeting Date: February 23, 2026

From: Donnie Rosa, Chief Administrative
Officer

Report No.: 2026-81

Re: **BC Housing Tiny Homes Village**

Staff Recommendation

THAT the report titled “BC Housing Tiny Homes Village” dated February 23, 2026 from the Chief Administrative Officer, be received for information.

Purpose

To information on BC Housing’s development of a 30-unit tiny homes village at 502 Twentieth Street.

Summary

New Westminster is now part of a provincial government program called “HEART & HEARTH” which supports projects that address homelessness. Funded through this Provincial program, BC Housing is working with the City to develop a tiny homes village at 502 Twentieth Street. The village would provide transitional housing for 30 people for up to six years while permanent, purpose-designed supportive housing sites are developed in New Westminster. The village would be operated by an experienced, non-profit housing provider, be secured and staffed 24/7, and offer wrap-around supports to residents.

BC Housing has notified neighbouring residents and businesses, and will hold community information sessions about the village this spring. The aim is for the village to be tenanted before winter 2026-27. BC Housing would address possible externalities through a Letter of Commitment and the establishment of a Neighbourhood Inclusion Table, and the housing provider would be subject to an Operations Management Plan.

Consistent with other municipalities in Metro Vancouver and the province, New Westminster is facing increasing homelessness. There is an immediate need for additional shelter and transitional housing capacity, with wrap-around supports. A tiny homes village would help bridge this important and identified gap in the housing continuum, and prepare people for success when transitioning to supportive housing.

The tiny homes village is aligned with City strategic and housing policies, which prioritize the placement of locally unhoused people as well as acknowledge the need for an equitable distribution of project sites across the city. The tiny homes village qualifies for some cost offsets from the City's Affordable Housing Reserve Fund (up to \$500,000 over the project's lifetime) per the policies guiding use of that fund.

Background

Housing Need in New Westminster

All municipalities are facing increasing homelessness, and New Westminister is no exception. The March 2025 Greater Vancouver Point-in-Time Homeless Count found 74 unsheltered and 143 sheltered homeless people in New Westminister. Combined, there were 217 unsheltered and sheltered homeless persons enumerated as part of the 2025 count. This represents an increase of 14 persons or 7% from the 2023 count, which was a slightly lower rate of increase than for Metro Vancouver (9%). Of note, the increase in New Westminister was all unsheltered homeless persons due, in part, to a lack of shelter and transitional housing capacity in New Westminister.

Evidence has shown that prevention, support and transition services are essential to: reducing the number of people falling into homelessness; decreasing the time that people are homeless; and supporting people while homeless— including preparing them to transition out of homelessness into permanent supportive housing. Given the increase in the unsheltered homeless population in New Westminister, there is an immediate need for additional shelter and transitional housing capacity while other more permanent shelter and supportive housing sites are developed. A tiny homes village would help bridge this important and identified gap in the housing continuum in New Westminister.

Alignment with City Policy

The project is aligned with the following plans, all of which have been endorsed by Council:

- The City's *Interim Housing Needs Report (2024-44)*, which was endorsed by Council at the December 9, 2024 Regular Meeting, that identifies a need for 58 net new shelter spaces and 142 supportive housing units in New Westminister by 2029;
- The *Crises Response Five-Year Prevention, Support and Transition Services Plan*, which was endorsed by Council at the February 10, 2025 Regular Meeting, which includes ten short-term actions intended to address the immediate needs of people experiencing homelessness, mental health and substance use issues with the goal of stabilizing their lives; and
- The *Crises Response Ten-Year Supportive Housing and Wrap-Around Services Plan*, which was also endorsed by Council at the February 10, 2025 Regular Meeting, includes eight long-term actions focused on securing funding from senior levels of government to construct permanent, purpose-designed supportive housing that is equitably distributed in neighbourhoods throughout the city.

Provincial Funding

The Province continues to support the implementation of homeless counts and strategically deliver shelter, transitional, and supportive housing as well as community-based interventions as part of the *Belonging in BC* plan to rapidly respond to homelessness and housing instability across British Columbia.

“HEART and HEARTH” is a two-pronged program that forms part of the Province’s *Belonging in BC* plan. HEART is a Homeless Encampment Action Response Team that provides resources to coordinate outreach services across providers. HEARTH (Homeless Encampment Response through Temporary Housing) facilitates both development and operation of emergency housing and shelter options within a community. The program was first launched in fall 2023, with a small number of municipalities.

Through extensive advocacy efforts by staff, the City is now also part of the Provincial HEART & HEARTH program (see the recent news release in Attachment 1). The tiny homes village is a HEARTH funded project. This branch of the funding program is also supporting renovations and extended hours at the current 50-bed shelter at 502 Columbia Street, which is operated by the Purpose Society.

Tiny Homes Village Model

A tiny homes village is a collection of compact, individual, modular housing units clustered together with shared amenity spaces. The village serves as transitional housing for people who have experienced homelessness, supporting them on their path toward stable and permanent housing. To that end, the villages include wrap-around services and health supports for residents. This approach helps to break the cycle of homelessness by providing a unique housing option that allows individuals to experience stability, facilitate greater independence, receive needed healthcare, and (re)gain essential life skills. Tiny homes villages have also been found to provide greater cultural safety for Indigenous community members, as compared to higher density or more institutional-style buildings. Duncan, Kelowna, and Victoria offer notable provincial examples of the success of tiny homes villages.

Analysis

Project Description

The village will include 30 housing units, with shared indoor and outdoor communal spaces (e.g. living room), storage, washrooms, waste collection, and an administration office for on-site staff. BC Housing is relocating modular (container) units from a village in Victoria that was decommissioned in fall 2025, called “Caledonia Place”. Images of that village are included as Attachment 2, as an example of the units and what a village configuration could look like. Village configurations can be in different shapes, depending on the site. They can be open (clusters) or closed (circles) though they are always fenced and screened. The New Westminster village layout will be designed over the summer, and will include additional modular amenity buildings to those used in Victoria.

Access into the village is controlled by 24/7 staff who also coordinate on-site programming such as meals, health services, skills building, tenant support, and transportation. Upon move in, all residents are expected to sign a program agreement that outlines standards for respectful behavior. Residents live in the village full-time and may reside there for a period of months to years. Services are brought on-site to better meet the needs of residents, similar to other forms of supportive housing. Space for staff and service provider parking, as well as for loading, delivery and waste collection would be provided on-site. City bylaws, such as for noise or unsightly premises, would apply and could be enforced, as with any private property.

The village is proposed to be in place for up to six years while other more permanent, purpose-designed 24/7 shelter and supportive housing sites are developed in New Westminster, at which point residents would be transitioned to those more permanent homes.

Location

BC Housing is working to lease 502 Twentieth Street from a private landholder for use as a tiny homes village for up to six years. The site is located on River Drive at the end of a row of residences, just before the rail yard and Queensborough Bridge. The site is adjacent to the BC Parkway, though at a lower grade. There are pedestrian connections at both the eastern and western ends of the site to the BC Parkway and overpasses on Stewardson Way/Marine Drive. The 22nd Street SkyTrain station and bus hub is approximately a 15-minute walk from the site.

City Land Use Regulations

The tiny homes village is directly aligned with the Crises Response Pilot Project's *Ten-year Supportive Housing and Wrap-Around Services Plan*. This Plan recommends actions and timing priorities to achieve the City's housing targets for shelter beds and supportive housing units. This plan prioritizes the placement of the city's locally unhoused population and acknowledges the need for an equitable distribution of projects across the city, and that all neighbourhoods play a role in supporting housing needs.

The Crisis Response Bylaws No. 8285, 2021 and No. 8286, 2021, allow emergency, shelter, or affordable housing and similar uses in all Official Community Plan (OCP) land use designations and zoning districts (respectively) in the city, provided the site is owned or leased by government. As such, regardless of location, a tiny homes village established by BC Housing is compliant with the City's land use policies. A Development Permit will not be required given the government use, and that minimal site regrading, paving, landscaping, or building foundations are expected. Arborist review and tree protection is expected. A Works and Service Agreement would be required with BC Housing prior to construction, where the servicing levels would be commensurate with the temporary and emergency-response nature of the project.

The property (502 Twentieth Street) is designated "Industrial" in the Official Community Plan and zoned M-1 (Light Industrial District) in the Zoning Bylaw. Once the tiny homes village is decommissioned, the property is expected to be returned to original condition and become re-available for industrial uses. A private owner or operator proposing a

non-industrial use would require regulatory approvals such as an OCP amendment or rezoning.

BC Housing Operations and Accountability

Similar to other sites province-wide, the village would be established by BC Housing, who would select an experienced, non-profit housing provider through a competitive process (request for proposals/RFP). Resident selection for the tiny homes would be based on BC Housing criteria and programming. Staff are working with BC Housing for priority to be given to people currently experiencing homelessness in New Westminster. BC Housing will provide a Letter of Commitment, an Operations Management Plan, and a Neighbourhood Inclusion Table for the project. This is similar to the approach for the recent HEARTH shelter project at 502 Columbia Street as well as other HEARTH projects province-wide. This approach addresses design and operational considerations; provides a mechanism for responding to potential externalities; and offers an opportunity for community interests to be engaged.

Notice and Information Meetings

BC Housing has notified the residences and businesses that neighbour the project through an addressed letter. The notice was delivered to 25 residential addresses and three large businesses (Southern Rail, Fraser River Pile & Dredge, and Kruger Products). The letter includes:

- contact information for any questions and concerns, or arising issues as the project gets underway;
- a link to the project website on BC Housing's "Let's Talk" platform which is updated with information as the project progresses; and
- an invitation to information meetings for neighbours, scheduled for the first week of March 2026.

BC Housing is also planning a second information meeting later in March 2026, for a broader audience. That meeting would be advertised per BC Housing's standard communication methods, through the Connaught Heights and West End Residents' Associations.

Financial Implications

In alignment with the *Affordable Housing Reserve Fund Policy and Funding Allocation Guidelines*, up to \$500,000 is available within the City's 2026-2030 capital plan for this project over its lifetime, in order to support off-site upgrades and lease costs. This contribution forms part of the City's participation in the Provincial HEART & HEARTH funding program. As design work is still underway, the exact cost is not known, but is expected to fall within that estimated budget. Alternative funding sources and grant programs are being actively identified and explored by Inter-governmental Relations. Identified alternate opportunities will be provided to Council for consideration.

Next Steps

Spring 2026

1. A series of targeted information sessions held by BC Housing for immediate neighbours and businesses, notice and invitations delivered to 25 residential addresses and three business addresses.
2. BC Housing engages a contractor who begins to prepare the site (clearing vegetation, service connections, etc.).
3. Container units are shipped by truck to the site for temporary storage while the village design is being finalized.
4. A community information session on the tiny homes village is held by BC Housing for a more general audience.

Summer 2026

5. BC Housing staff work in collaboration with the City to finalize the village design, including on-site and off-site servicing and infrastructure needs.
6. Containers are updated and retrofitted on-site, and additional modular amenity buildings are procured and shipped to site.
7. BC Housing runs a procurement process including public Request for Proposals (RFP) to secure an experienced, non-profit housing provider for the tiny homes village. BC Housing then evaluates the proposals, and awards the contract.

Fall 2026

8. The tiny homes village set-up is finalized.
9. A tenant selection process occurs through BC Housing's Coordinated Access Program, with priority given to New Westminster's locally unhoused population.
10. Goal of commissioning the Village and opening it to residents by winter 2026-27.

Interdepartmental Liaison

An interdisciplinary staff team has been assembled to participate in discussions around this project, including staff from the Engineering and Public Works, Planning and Development, Energy and Climate Action, and Community Services Departments, as well as Office of the CAO, Fire, and Police.

Attachments

Attachment 1 – HEART & HEARTH Provincial News Release, February 9, 2026

Attachment 2 – Example Tiny Homes Villages Images

Report Approval

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