

THE 127 SOCIETY

FOR HOUSING

1050 Expo Boulevard Project



October 14, 2008

Dear Friends

We wrote to you in March describing the process on which we were embarking to develop a new 133-unit building as part of the initiative by the City of Vancouver and BC Housing for further affordable and supportive living on 12 sites in the City. Much has happened since then and although we are closer to the start of construction, we are not as far advanced as we had hoped. It was planned that construction starts would be made on six out of the twelve before the end of the year, ours was to be one of those. Alas because of delays beyond our control, it appears that substantial excavation on our site will not begin before February 2009 although there could be a

token “sod-turning” before then. Completion is currently estimated to be in late 2010, not in time for the Olympics (not one of our priorities!!).

Together with our service provider partner, St James Community Service Society, we have been working closely with our architect DYSArchitecture, housing consultant Terra Housing, Scott Construction Services, and various subconsultants on developing the designs. The process has involved submission of a development permit (DP) application, holding a public open house, presentations to the City Urban Design Panel, and presence at the DP hearing. In addition there were informal meetings with concerned residents, and regular bi-weekly meetings with BC Housing and the consultants. There are ongoing discussions with BC Housing on the staffing levels for the operation and the budget. An operations and management plan is in preparation.

Opposition to the project has been stronger than anticipated primarily on the basis of the size of the building, number of units (BC Housing had originally planned for 100), and the background of the tenants (how many would be addicted and what would be the severity of their addictions). A formal community advisory committee (CAC) will be established and the process is under consideration by BC Housing.

The project was approved by the DP panel but with what is known as “prior-to” conditions. These are items which require further consideration, adjustment, redesign etc to meet the final approval of the panel including the establishment of a CAC. In addition the Province has required that the new building should be designed to the LEED Gold environmental standard. Debate is still going on amongst the consultants as to how and to what extent this will be achieved whilst still remaining within budgets that are acceptable to BC Housing. It is not an easy process and it is likely that we shall finish up with a fine but expensive building!! Our main concern is the cost and maintenance of operation.

The foundations of the building have also provided headaches. There is some 10 m of contaminated fill overlying weak soils and bedrock at some depth. As we have only one level of parking we do not need to remove all of the contaminated sediments and to do so and backfill with clean fill would be expensive. Also the required piles to support the building will have to be long and their installation must not impact on the neighbouring services and structures. The anticipated geothermal heating using the rock to gain or lose heat cannot be undertaken because of the possibility of carrying the contamination to deeper levels. All of these are manageable issues but they take time to sort out and have an influence on costs.

So all in all we are becoming familiar with the many steps needed to bring our building to fruition. With the new environmental requirements, and being closer to Yaletown, it is proving to be more complex than when we built any of our other three operations. However it continues to be exciting and most importantly we will be able to provide 133 people with a place that they can call home.

We are also pleased to tell you that the Board has decided that the Expo project building will be named “The Circle”. This has been chosen for several reasons but primarily because it reflects the circle of compassion which is at the core of what we as a Society are trying to achieve. It also seems appropriate because our site contains the large red gear wheel from the old Cambie Street mechanism which was placed there during Expo 86.

We will bring you further news periodically.

With kind regards,

Hilda Gregory (President)

Graham Rawlings (Vice-President)