

A CASE FOR SUPPORT

Co:Here Housing Project

The *Co:Here* Foundation and its partners invite you to participate in a holistic response to homelessness in Vancouver through the creation of housing that takes into consideration the needs of the whole person.

 **Co:HERE**
home for good

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A HOLISTIC VISION

Affordable housing and social isolation are two of the biggest challenges facing the city of Vancouver today. Often we think of this as a problem of bricks and mortar, but this is only half the problem. The real challenge is the human need that accompanies homelessness: loneliness and isolation. *Co:Here* envisions addressing these human needs through intentional community living in a 26-unit building in East Vancouver.

Community is a partnering, a shared space—an ethos about the rhythms of living and co-ownership of a space. It is, by definition, a group of people living together in one place, practicing common ownership. The *Co:Here* community will be made up of a mix of tenants: 20 units allocated for Residents in need of housing, and 6 units for Co-Residents, those who choose to journey with them.

The building itself sets the stage for intentional community. Entering on the main level, the layout invites shared living through a communal kitchen, dining, and gathering space as well as a place for meditation or prayer, and offices for support workers.

From an elevator or stairwell to each of the three floors above, tenants step into a pod, rather than a cold, long hallway. The floors have two pods, each unique in its configuration, organized around an urban porch that serves four or five living units. Each studio, one-bedroom, or two-bedroom unit is self-contained and provides tenants with a kitchen and all the necessities of private, healthy, and comfortable living. A co-resident occupies one unit in each pod, cultivating space for relationship building amongst pod tenants. Natural light, a seating area, and a washer

and dryer encourage another layer of “*Co:Here*” to develop. More than a place to live, these pods serve as the launch pad for a journey towards health and human flourishing—a restoration of what it means to be human—for residents and co-residents alike. But the sense of community doesn’t end there: a courtyard and community garden provide outdoor space and an active urban garden to further foster *Co:Here*’s vision of residents and co-residents interacting and building relationships with each other.

A final intangible of this building is its own sustainability. Both environmentally (LEED Gold certified) and economically sustainable, the *Co:Here* community will not be a future drain on precious resources. Rather, *Co:Here* is built around a financial model in which the building’s revenue sustains a balanced budget that includes a support worker and requires no ongoing charitable contributions.

The *Co:Here* Foundation, along with its partners, invites you to join with us to develop the building and community envisioned above. Together, we will create a space for human beings to flourish and create community here at Victoria Drive and 1st Avenue East.

I. ROOTED IN THE COMMUNITY

The collective wisdom of *Co:Here's* founding partners recognizes that in order for human beings to flourish, they require more than just shelter; they also need a sense of belonging of community, safety, and support. *Co:Here's* organizational partners include:

Salsbury Community Society (SCS)

With 17 years experience managing housing projects in the Grandview-Woodlands neighbourhood, SCS is the ideal organization to operate the building. SCS will contribute to the governance of *Co:Here* through the selection of 50 per cent of the Board of Directors.

Grandview Calvary Baptist Church (GCBC)

Part of the Grandview-Woodlands neighbourhood since 1908, Grandview Calvary Baptist Church is committed to being a place of welcome and hospitality to all people. The Church has donated the land toward the project. It will also play an important role in shaping this community. GCBC will contribute to the governance of *Co:Here* through the selection of 50 per cent of the Board of Directors.

Just Work Economic Initiative

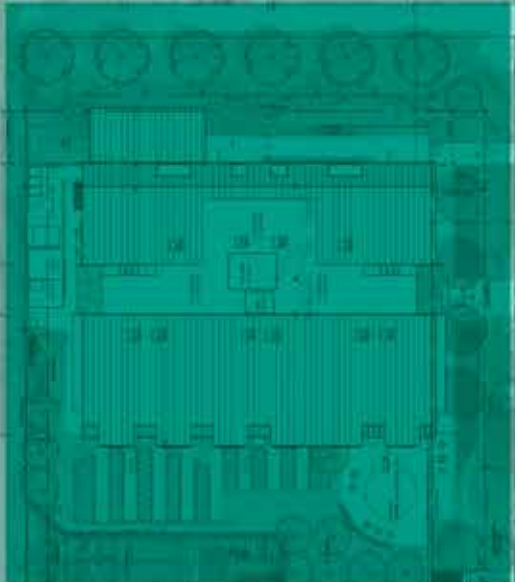
An organization that provides employment for people facing major challenges and barriers to conventional employment, Just Work will help residents explore employment opportunities, including catering, renovations and pottery.

This history and depth of experience is enriched by the long-term commitment of patrons such as the Hawthorne Foundation, which has been with Co:Here since its inception.



1ST AVENUE EAST

VICTORIA DRIVE



The site is located on the corner of 1st Avenue East, and Victoria, one block away from the heart of the Commercial Drive neighbourhood.



II. OUR VISION, MISSION & GOALS



VISION

To foster human flourishing through the creation of affordable housing communities defined by a commitment to care for the whole person.



MISSION

To respond to the crisis of homelessness through the construction of an affordable and holistic housing community of 26 units on the southwest corner of Victoria Drive and 1st Avenue East that will help foster human flourishing through a commitment to the vision of *Co:Here* Foundation.



GOALS

- To provide economically sustainable housing for the homeless and those at risk of homelessness in the Grandview-Woodland neighbourhood.
- To create a community that fosters mutual support and the common good among a socio-economically diverse group of residents. This will be achieved through a rhythm of life in communal spaces, which fosters a sense of belonging, community, friendship, and a shared stewardship of the building.
- To provide housing committed to the reduction of negative environmental impact. This will be achieved through thoughtful use of energy, space, and design, and adherence to LEED Gold standards—as well as use of 2,690 sq ft for urban agriculture and communal outdoor space.
- To offer a prototype of an alternative, refreshing model of sustainable and affordable housing. This will also have the demonstrated benefit of long-term improvement in the lives of those who experience a healing and life-giving community. It is hoped that this will become a prototype that can be replicated on other lots throughout Vancouver.

III. RATIONALE

Need

Vancouver faces one of the most complex housing problems in Canada. According to the 2013 Vancouver Homeless Count, some 300 people are without housing of any kind and an additional 1,300 defined as “sheltered homeless”—lacking adequate or affordable housing. The significant stress that housing challenges cause is intensified by the personal, social, emotional, and mental vulnerabilities that many of the homeless or under-housed face. Of particular concern is the issue of loneliness—considered one of the greatest human challenges for those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Response

A 26-unit community, *Co:Here* is a housing model that creates a safe place where residents can discover the healing benefits of community. Through being welcomed into a “family” experience, residents gain the space and support they need to move from mere survival to a full, whole life.

Co:Here’s approach is defined by the formation of an intentional community of residents and co-residents, marked by equality, reciprocal care, mutual respect, support, hospitality, and companionship. These distinguishing characteristics will, together, foster human flourishing—a right relationship with ourselves, with one another, with the environment and, ultimately, with God—among all involved.

IV. PROJECT DEFINED

The Building

See appendix for floor plans and street views

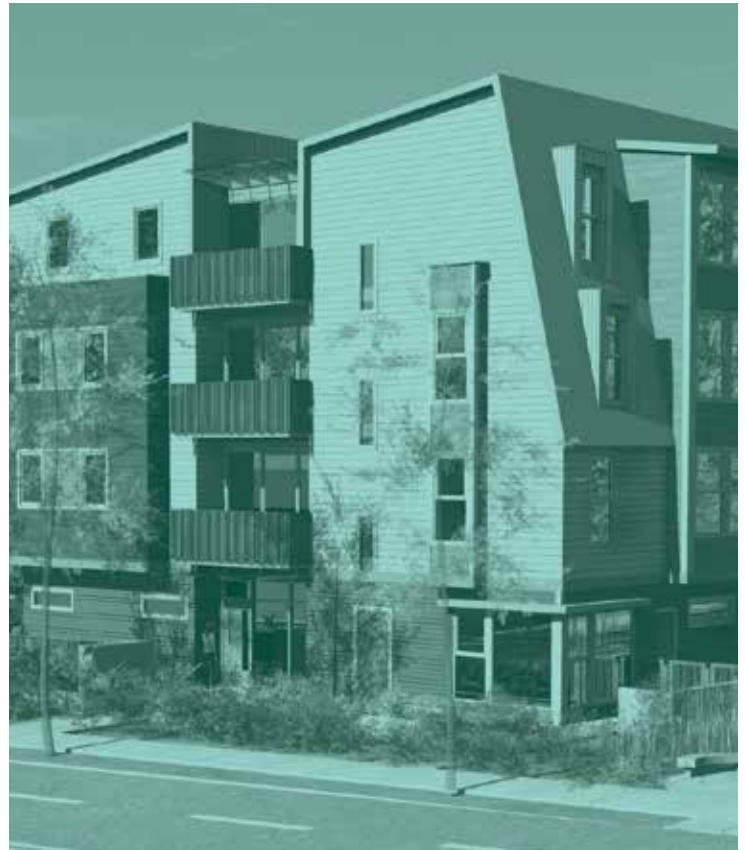
Co:Here is building a four-storey, affordable housing complex with 26 self-contained units: 18 studios, 4 one- and 4 two-bedroom units, designed with the recognition that space shapes engagement between people.

To facilitate a sense of community, equality, mutual care, and companionship, the building includes 2335 sq ft of community space (kitchen, living room, dining room, and meditation and quiet room); 2690 sq ft of outdoor space for urban agriculture; and 340 sq ft of office space for its care-centred staff and organizational partners. Of particular importance is the arrangement of self-contained apartments around “pods” of shared space on the 2nd, 3rd and 4th floors (see plans on page 24).

The tenant makeup reflects the unique commitments of this approach to housing, ensuring the mutual care and transformation of all involved in this diverse gathering of individuals and families.

“The project has been designed, collaboratively, to resonate with the *Co:Here* initiative; it considers human need, community, thoughtful design, and sustainable solutions.”

- Larry Adams, Architect AIBC



2335 FT² Community space

2690 FT² Outdoor space designed for agricultural space

340 FT² Office space

IV. THE PROJECT DEFINED

The Intentional Community of Support

THE TENANTS

There are two primary tenant groups: residents and co-residents, engaging in life together in common spaces. This engagement will provide an atmosphere of acceptance and belonging, while fostering a sense of community.

Residents

There will be 20 units dedicated for Residents who are homeless, or are at risk of homelessness, whose roots are in the Grandview-Woodland neighbourhood. These residents will consist of those wishing to engage in affordable housing that provides not only a home, but also the opportunity to be part of a community. The target resident ratio will be 50 per cent male and 50 per cent female, with seniors comprising 20 per cent of the residents.

Co-Residents

The six co-resident units will be dedicated to individuals, couples, and small families who are drawn by a vision of living in a community where life is shared with people of diverse backgrounds, in an open-handed, simplified life-style. Co-residents will consist of Grandview Calvary Baptist Church members and other people of faith who desire to foster human flourishing. The “co” in “co-residents” affirms the non-hierarchical nature of the community, and the equality and mutuality intrinsic in this vision. These co-residents will be committed to participatory, collective decision-making processes regarding community life.

THE STAFF

Co:Here, which owns the property, has commissioned Salsbury Community Society (SCS), to manage the property. Part of that management is the provision of three primary staff members:

Building and Maintenance Manager

Employed part-time (.3 FTE) and accountable to SCS. Responsible for collecting and depositing rent, looking after maintenance and repairs, paying bills, overseeing the applicant database, collaborating with members of individual pods to address conflict or disputes, as well as filling vacant suites, the Building and Maintenance Manager will also enforce the tenancy agreement. In addition, this employee will be responsible for performing or arranging all repairs and maintenance for the building.

Community Support Worker

Employed full-time (1.0 FTE) and reporting to the Salsbury Board of Directors, the Community Support Worker will play a key role initiating structures of support for the intentional community of support. This employee will provide guidance, leadership, and accompaniment as this group seeks mutual care for one other and a sense of co-ownership and responsibility.

Property Management

Employed part-time (.2 FTE) and accountable to *Co:Here*. The property manager will oversee the applicant database, paying bills, payroll and provide overall guidance and support to the Building and Maintenance Manager and the Community Support Worker.

IV. THE PROJECT DEFINED

Sustaining the Vision



SELECTION CRITERIA

In order to ensure that all tenants selected will be active participants in, and contributors to, this unique community, *Co:Here* and its partners have established a fair and transparent tenant selection process.

COMMUNITY GATHERINGS

The uniqueness of this affordable housing endeavor is the spirit of the place, and of those who dwell there. It will be a priority of *Co:Here* Foundation and its partners to intentionally preserve this uniqueness. Prior to occupancy, the Community Support Worker will facilitate four to six gatherings for all tenants. These meetings will be the starting point of shaping and fostering community amongst tenants, which in turn will sustain the spirit of the community. Additionally, four workshops/retreats—which will provide a time for learning, communication, and fostering community—will be offered annually.

V. PROGRESS TO DATE

There has been significant progress towards the launch of the *Co:Here* Foundation's affordable housing community on Victoria Drive and 1st Avenue East. Progress includes:



Visioning

Co:Here has drawn on the experience of its partner, Salsbury Community Society, which has extensive experience in operating community houses in the neighbourhood. *Co:Here* has also gathered input from a number of homeless individuals on what is important for them in a home. Internal workshops have been held to clarify vision and to draft business and operational plans, and a budget. Neighbourhood consultations resulted in significant design changes to accommodate concerns.

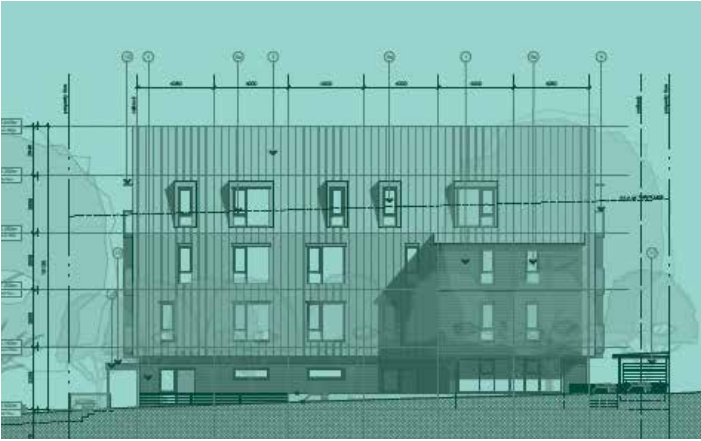
Property & Approvals

Grandview Calvary Baptist Church donated three city lots on the southwest corner of 1st Avenue East and Victoria Drive. The City of Vancouver unanimously approved the rezoning application on April 18, 2012. The Development Permit application was approved by the City of Vancouver on February 26, 2014.

Funding

Co:Here Foundation has established a robust and diverse community of patrons and financial partners who have caught the vision of this non-segregated approach to address the profound human and housing needs in Vancouver. To date, *Co:Here* has raised \$10 million of the estimated \$11.5 million necessary to complete construction.

V. PROGRESS TO DATE



Architecture

Architectural drawings have been completed for the Development Permit stage. Neale Staniszki Doll Adams Architects have designed the building with an emphasis on creating spaces that foster safety, stability, community, and hospitality—as well as environmental sustainability.

Design & Construction

The building is a four-storey, wood frame structure on a single level of underground parking. The north façade provides a strong, durable block against busy traffic on 1st Avenue East, while the south side is open to garden and sun. Oriented in an east-west direction, the building is situated as far north on the property as permitted by the City. This creates and shields a large open space to the south, designed to be an active urban garden. Site coverage of 43 per cent helps maximize the garden space, and minimizes view blockage and overlook to the properties to the south.

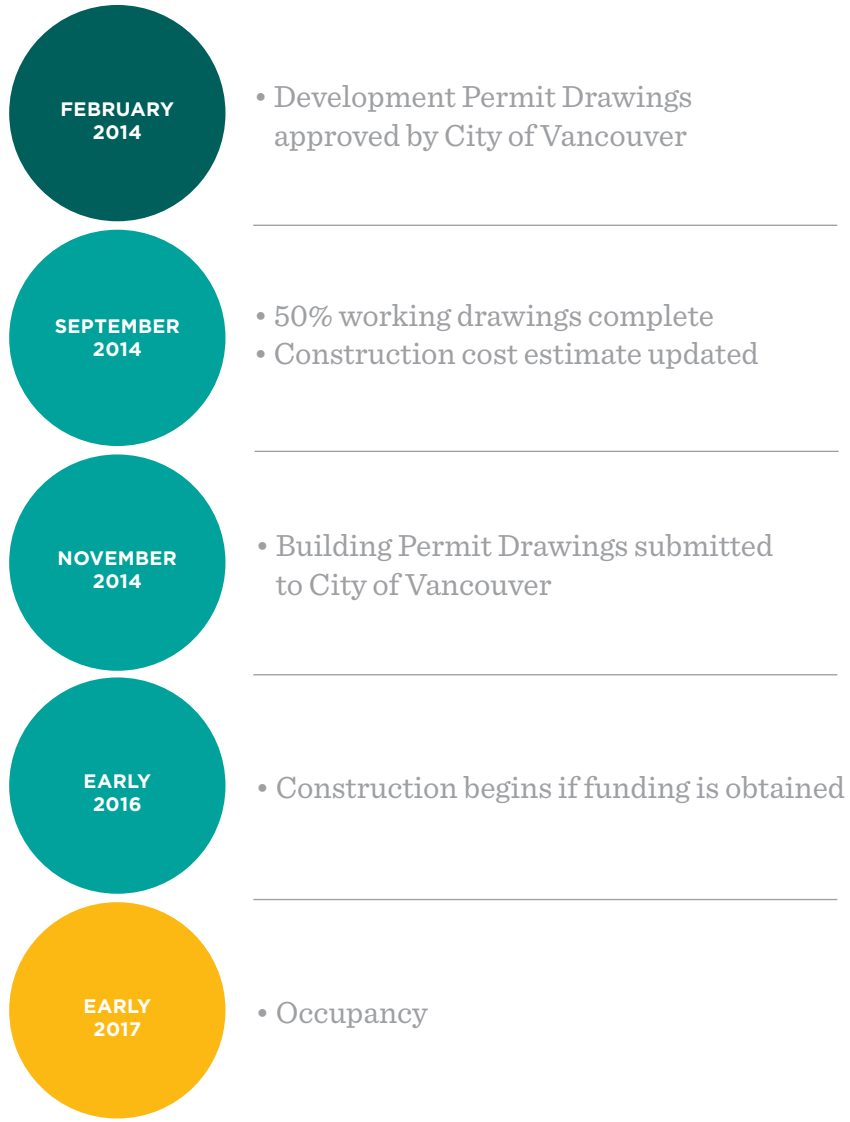
A highly-efficient envelope, solar shading, provision of cross-ventilation on the main floor, low glazing percentages, and the small urban garden all contribute to the environmentally-sustainable nature of this project (Certified LEED Gold).

The main floor is the focus for the communal indoor and outdoor activities. Uses include: dining and living spaces, a quiet room, a community kitchen, a guest suite, a computer room, and administration space.

The building contains 26 units (studio, one-, and two-bedroom), organized into sub-groups (pods) of four or five. To ensure affordability, the majority of the units are studios, four of which are wheel-chair accessible. The corridor on each upper level ends in a small social/meeting space creating a community “pod.” Each social space has a stacked washer/dryer, bulletin boards, and a seating area.

Construction is scheduled to begin in early 2016.

VI. CRITICAL PATH



Governance

Board of Directors

The Board of Directors of *Co:Here* Foundation has ultimate authority and accountability for managing the financial aspects of the housing project. It is fully engaged in the development of the *Co:Here* community and is the volunteer force behind this current campaign.

Managing Organization

Upon the completion of the capital project, *Co:Here* Foundation will turn the management of the property over to the Salsbury Community Society, a non-profit society and registered charity incorporated in 1997. SCS operates under the leadership of a volunteer board of directors, which is legally responsible for the actions of the Society.

SCS has established itself as an organization focused on building relationships and reducing barriers between people of different economic or ethnic backgrounds. Unlike a traditional client/service-provider model, SCS work is grounded in a philosophy of mutual transformation, which holds that relationships established and maintained between diverse community members enrich us all.

This concept is not new for Salsbury Community Society; it is based on the lived experience of operating three intentional-community homes and has proven effective in helping people achieve stability and well-being.

Legal

Throughout the development process, Benefic Group and Miller Thomson have provided *Co:Here* with legal counsel. A Development Agreement between *Co:Here*, Salsbury Community Society, Hawthorne Foundation, and Grandview Calvary Baptist Church outlines their commitment to each other, and the contribution and responsibilities of all parties.

The three legal agreements between the City of Vancouver and *Co:Here* Foundation are:

- a housing agreement, securing the long-term use of the building for affordable housing with supports;
- a services agreement, which ensures that *Co:Here* is responsible for costs of relevant “off-site” work, such as sidewalks, curbs, and pedestrian crossing lights.
- a parking covenant, reserving 12 underground parking stalls for the use of GCBC.

APPENDIX

Site Plan



APPENDIX

Building Rendering



APPENDIX

Building Rendering



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