

News

Olympic housing closer to helping local homeless

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The Progress

Things are starting to move at the School Street project site in Chilliwack, which will eventually house people with mental health issues.

Pre-loading and land-clearing is underway to prepare for the foundation work set to start next month.

The long-awaited housing project on School Street is "on track" and "moving ahead as it should," confirmed Dale Cuthbertson of Chilliwack Community Services.

CCS is one of the key project partners with Creative Centre Society, and BC Housing, which provided the bulk of the funding for the project, which has yet to be formally named.

Chilliwack is one of six B.C. communities due to receive a share of the decommissioned housing units from the Olympics to create more affordable spaces for the homeless and mentally ill. The 330 temporary housing modules built by Britco Structures for use by 2010 Olympic and Paralympic athletes are being dismantled in Whistler starting this week.

Some will be built into the affordable housing project in Chilliwack. A total of 33 units will be reconfigured and integrated for permanent use into the new facility by adding a kitchen and bathroom to each unit.

Cuthbertson told The Progress Tuesday he'd been on a conference call that morning, discussing the schedule for transporting the Britco-built, award-winning units to the various communities across B.C.

"We're at the end of the pipe. Some are being decommissioned now, while ours will be the last to

be pulled out near the end of May," he said.

Housing on the second floor will be for youth, while the top two floors will be for adults struggling with mental health and addictions issues. The first floor will be built from scratch and mainly used for office space, on top of which the housing

modules will be sited. The foundation will be poured in April, he said.

City council has been working toward implementing a coordinated affordable housing strategy, in part recognizing its importance after a community forum identified affordable housing as the most pressing social issue in Chilliwack.

It has been actively seeking "non-market" housing opportunities like the School Street opportunity, to address the dearth of affordable housing in Chilliwack.

Council waived the fees connected with the project when it was in the early stages.

Britco Structures, the largest modular building manufacturer in the Pacific Northwest with plants in Agassiz and Penticton, was awarded the contract to design and build the temporary housing for the Olympic and Paralympic Village Whistler in January 2008. Then they signed agreements to transform them into supportive housing, with the help of Olympic Legacy Affordable Housing funding.

The total capital cost of the Legacy Project was about \$43.6 million.

The construction of the temporary modular units at the Olympic and Paralympics Village at Whistler was \$18.2 million, of which VANOC will provide \$9.4 million with additional support from RONA, Britco and other sponsors. The province will contribute over \$20 million for the relocation, reconfiguration and site preparation costs in the six communities. A total of \$5.4 million in land value came from Chetwynd, Saanich, Sechelt and Surrey and by the province in Chilliwack and Enderby.

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Britco's award-winning athletes' village in Whistler is being converted into affordable housing units.

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