

Regional Housing First Program



Frequently Asked Questions

Capital Regional District | June 2020

What is “Housing First?”

Housing First is a recovery-oriented approach to ending homelessness that centers on quickly moving people experiencing homelessness into independent and permanent housing and then providing additional supports and services as needed. It is an approach first popularized by Sam Tsemberis and Pathways to Housing in New York in the 1990s, though there were similar programs emerging elsewhere, including Canada prior to this time.

The basic underlying principle of Housing First is that people are better able to move forward with their lives if they are first housed. This is as true for people experiencing homelessness and those with mental health and addictions issues as it is for anyone. Housing is provided first and then supports are provided including physical and mental health, education, employment, substance abuse and community connections.

What makes this program unique?

BC Housing, Island Health and the CRD will work with community partners to create a coordinated and more efficient system to address homelessness in the region.

The mixed market model housing avoids the need for dedicated support programs in specific locations. Instead, flexible, mobile services are delivered within the housing units located throughout the region.

Decentralization helps empower individuals, reduce stigmatization and creates more options for individuals seeking supported housing. Greater efficiencies will also increase the flow of clients through the overall system and thereby support more stable housing outcomes. Residents benefit through increased quality of life.

Who can be helped by this program?

People living in the region with a variety of housing needs. There will be units rented at the provincial income assistance rate, affordable market units and near-market units.

How do developers or providers participate?

The program’s [Request for Proposal process](#) provides non-profit and private developers the opportunity to propose viable projects that meet the criteria of the RHFP.

For more information, please visit <https://www.crd.bc.ca/project/regional-housing-first-program>

How and when can I apply for a housing unit?

Information regarding the approved projects will be included on the CRD website and updated as work progresses.

Applications for the affordable units and near-market units will be processed by housing providers directly.

Applications for the provincial income assistance units will be processed through a coordinated assessment and access process.

When will the projects be complete?

Information regarding the approved projects will be included on the [Housing First web page](#) and updated regularly.

Where will the projects be located?

Projects will be located across the capital region but must be close to transit and local services.

What supports are available to people living there?

The Regional Housing First Program model avoids the need for dedicated support programs in specific locations. Instead, where required, flexible, mobile services will be delivered within the housing units located throughout the region.

How will \$120 million generate so many rental units?

By purchasing 20% of units up-front, the CRD and BC Housing will reduce the proponents' need for debt financing of those units, which frees up funds that can go toward operating costs only. Proponents will also be able to access low-interest construction financing via BC Housing or CMHC. Revenue from all units will cover the operating and maintenance costs. Therefore the \$120 million pays for 20% of units.