

Hiyám ta Skwxwú7mesh Housing Society

UPDATE

TO: Squamish Nation Members, Council, Committees
DATE: September 28th, 2020

FROM: Sarah Silva, CEO, Hiyám Housing Society

SUBJECT: **Xwemelch'stn Housing Project Capilano Lacrosse Box Site, North Vancouver**

On September 20th, 2020, the Hiyám ta Skwxwú7mesh Housing Society was awarded the BC Housing Community Housing Fund (CHF) to build a 95-unit affordable housing project for the Squamish People. These funds are considered significant and competitive, since this is the first time this Provincial Government has funded housing projects for First Nations on-reserve.

Hiyám Housing will be hosting virtual community information sessions to answer questions and receive feedback on the project. There will be exciting opportunities at this new project for employment, training, cultural expression, and tenant programming, all of which will be presented at these sessions.

The Society will keep the community, Council, and Committees updated on the information sessions dates, as well as the process to apply to live and work at this building and other housing projects once it has been established. As a new society, Hiyám Housing is just starting to create its organizational structure, staffing, and policies and procedures.

The budget for this project, including the provincial investment portion, will be determined as construction contracts are finalized. This estimation could increase or decrease as the proposal moves through to the next stage of the evaluation process.

Hiyám Housing Society was created by Council after community consultation on the housing authority and nonprofit model. After the engagement, Council mandated the Society to develop and manage nonprofit housing for the community. Through community engagement, housing was identified by members as the highest priority. The Capilano Lacrosse Box Site was then further identified by Council and the Society's Board as a desirable location to build first because of its proximity to Nation services, amenities, and transportation including the Spirit Trail.

Project Details

The target populations that have been identified for this project are families with children, Elders, and low-to-moderate income youth. The project will reach up to four storeys in height, containing 95 affordable rental homes, including 40 ground-oriented units and townhouses, and 55 apartment units. The unit mix is 16 studios, 50 one-bedroom units, 18 two-bedroom units, 10 three-bedroom units, and a single five-bedroom unit.

The target population chosen for this project was based on the community engagement and the housing needs survey conducted in 2019. The engagement sought feedback regarding the priority that members place on various types of housing and where they wanted to live. Results from the engagement and survey show that 55% of respondents identified Elders housing as a priority, the highest-ranked housing priority area. Youth, family, and higher-density housing were also identified as priorities.

XWEMELCH'STN HOUSING PROJECT



The Xwemelch'stn Housing Project consists of a range of housing choices in a multi-generational housing approach, mixing Elders, families, and youth in a wholistic community which will foster positive intergenerational relationships. This unique opportunity to reimagine the traditional Squamish longhouse living practice of shared accommodation seeks to create a grounded living context of mutual support and learning opportunities. Hi'yám Housing will also have an office on-site and have professional tenant and maintenance systems in place to address any issues of security, health and safety.

Housing Need

There is a clear need for new housing options for the Squamish community. Currently, 53% of Squamish Nation members are living off-reserve and often paying high market rents that make life unaffordable. There are currently 1,039 Squamish Nation members on the housing wait list, and the most recent housing allocations have been to Nation members who have been on the waitlist for 30+ years, demonstrating a demand and urgency for new housing options. There is a strong desire to create higher density housing which will allow our members to return home and live in the community.

Development Team

Hiyám Housing won the CHF funding as a “shovel-ready” project, meaning that the development team needed to be in place with the submission. Hiyám Housing brought in a strong, experienced team by conducting requests for proposals (RFP) and quotes. The final development team includes the following partners: Lu’ma Development Management (LDM), Urban Arts Architecture, and Ventana Construction.

LDM was selected as development consultants for the project, as they are an Indigenous development consultant firm, and are also involved with the ongoing work with the Squamish Nation in the set-up and establishment of Hiyám Housing Society. The Society will work with the community to make certain any further employment and training opportunities are presented throughout the development. More details to come on this at the virtual community sessions.

Rent Structure

The project must reflect the following mix of rents and incomes:

- 30% Affordable housing (moderate income)
- 50% Rent geared to income (housing income limit)
- 20% Deep subsidy

The Xwemelch’stn Housing Project will offer a mix of rents for a range of incomes, with 20% of the units deeply subsidized starting at \$375 monthly for a studio or one-bedroom unit, 59% of the units at housing income limits (HIL’s) starting at \$837 monthly for a studio or one-bedroom unit, and 30% of the units as affordable moderate income homes starting at \$1,030 monthly for a one-bedroom unit.

BC Housing’s Community Housing Fund has specific requirements regarding rent structure, unit size, and target populations. That said, the Society also based the rents on the income levels demonstrated in the 2019 housing needs survey, as well as the funding requirements.

The following rents have been established:

Number of Units: 95

Unit Type	Core		HILs		Moderate Income		Total
	#	Rent	#	Rent	#	Rent	
Studio	10	\$375	6	\$837	0	N/A	16
One Bed	3	\$375	38	\$837	9	\$1,030	50
Two Bed	3	\$570	5	\$1,024	10	\$1,260	18
Three Bed	3	\$660	0	N/A	7	\$1,470	10
Five Bed	0	N/A	0	N/A	1	\$1,750	1
Sub total	19		49		27		95
	20%		50%		30%		100%

Housing Income Limits (HILs) represent the maximum gross household income for eligibility in many affordable housing programs. The HILs are based on figures established by CMHC (federal government) and are intended to reflect the minimum income required to afford appropriate accommodation in the private market.

For that reason, Hiya'm Housing based the Housing Income Limits for this project based on the income levels of the Squamish Nation community and not those of the outside community, as they are not comparable. The final rents have not been approved by BC Housing; nonetheless, the rents in this project will be subsidized by the Province to keep them affordable through the life of the project.

Project Schedule

A high-level schedule is outlined in the table below. Construction is scheduled to start in March 2021 with occupancy in May 2022. The construction period to build the project and the occupancy date will be completed within 20 months.

Design Development	August 2020 – September 2020
BCH CHF Application	September 4, 2020
Working Drawings Begin	September 10, 2020
Building Permit Submission	December 4, 2020
Final Pricing and Funding Commitment	February - March 2021

Construction Start	March 2021
Occupancy	May 2022

Land Designation

This project is on-reserve and an agreement is in place with Metro Vancouver for site servicing. A Band Council Resolution has been passed for an 18(2) lease, which does not require member approval. Even so, Hi'yám' Housing Society will continue to work with the Squamish Nation to designate the land, a process which is subject to a vote by membership. There are no dates confirmed yet to conduct the land designation. As this is a community driven process, the Society will update and engage the community when more information is available.

Section 18(2)

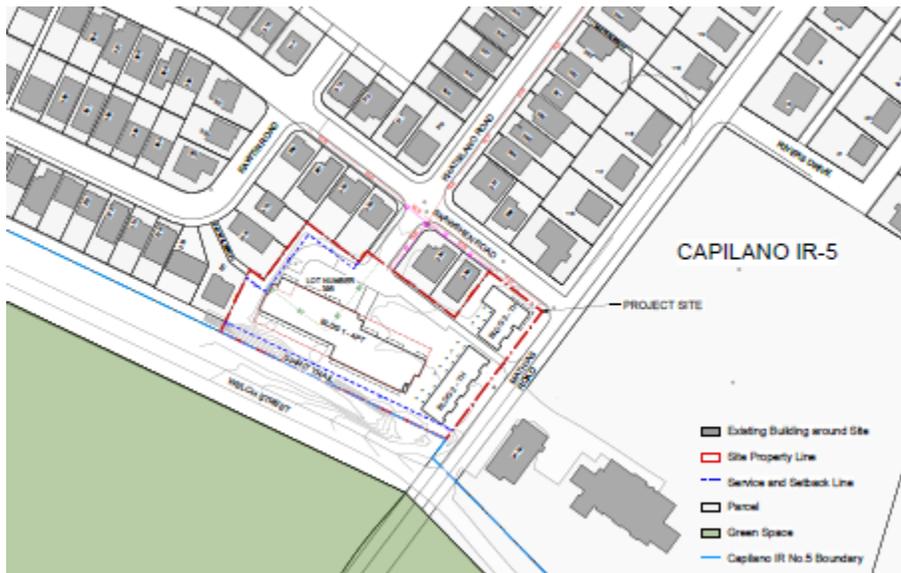
Council set aside this lot for the purposes of social housing units under subsection 18(2) of the Indian Act for the general welfare of the Squamish Nation through a Band Council Resolution (BCR). This section of the Indian Act allows for a leasehold interest in the land, grounded on the site being community use as nonprofit housing.

Funding

This project is funded through: a capital grant, mortgage payment to cover development/construction costs, and a monthly operating subsidy.

The capital mortgage/loan payment is covered by the tenant rent payments and an operating subsidy from the Province. This project must be owned (with a mortgage interest of 35 years) and operated by an entity that meets BC Housing’s constating document requirements and is eligible for CMHC-insured financing arranged by BC Housing.

The 60-year operating agreement term is to cover the full expected economic life of the building, including operating subsidy, to ensure the intended level of affordability can be retained. An operating subsidy will be provided to bridge any gap between the budgeted revenues and expenses, including mortgage payments.



Location: Capilano Indian Reserve No 5 at the corner of Welch Street and Mathias Road, North Vancouver.

Parking Stalls: 32 Surface, 44 Underground

Bike Stalls: 101 bike lockers, plus 16 youth units with in-suite bike storage

Target Populations:

Family Housing

This project has 31% larger family units, including one five-bedroom unit, which is important to serve larger families in the community. As a result of the townhouse form utilized for 11 of the family units, there will be back yards and direct access to the street for these units. 19 units in this project (20%) will be dedicated for use by families. Eight of the family units will be two-bedroom apartments, 10 units will be three-bedroom townhouses, and one unit will be a five-bedroom townhouse.

Independent Elders Housing

Elders are another priority target population for this project, which is supported by results of a recent survey that was conducted with Squamish Nation members as part of the community engagement process for establishing the Hiyám ta Skwxwú7mesh Housing Society. According to the survey, 55% of respondents identified Elders housing as a priority — the highest ranked housing priority area among all options identified in the survey. For this reason, 59 of 95 units (62%) will be dedicated to Elders housing to ensure that the project serves the greater need for multi-generational housing. There will be 49 one-bedroom apartments for Elders, and an additional 10 two-bedroom units to allow for Elders who require live-in supports.

The details of who is considered an Elder has not be approved yet and will be determined by the Society, guided by engagement with the community and committees.

Youth Housing

To meet a specific community need, youth have also been identified as a target population for this project, including youth that are leaving the care system. There is an over-representation of Indigenous youth aging out of foster care, which can lead to barriers such as homelessness, addictions, poverty, and unemployment. Sixteen units (17%) will be dedicated to youth, with five of the units being studio apartments and 11 being lock-off studios in the townhouses that have the potential to be integrated with family units above.

The details of who is considered a youth has not been approved yet and will be determined by the Society, guided by engagement with the community.

Cultural Expression

Key design elements ground the project in Squamish culture, including:

- Solar screens incorporating Squamish designs;
- Contemporary Squamish blanket pattern at apartment building entry;
- Squamish Language incorporated into all signage throughout the site;

- Healing, cultural, art, and dance spaces will be included to create a sense of place and pride;
- Landscape will incorporate culturally relevant and evocative structures at key nodes.

All of the above cultural components will be evolved and created in collaboration with the Squamish community, including Elders, artists, and knowledge keepers. More details on this will be presented at the virtual community sessions.

Amenities and Services

This project will include a community grocery co-operative that will create economic benefits for Squamish Nation community members by injecting wealth back into the community, creating employment opportunities for community members, and returning surplus profits as benefits back to the cooperative owners.

In addition to the economic benefits created, the grocery co-operative will support food security and food sovereignty in the community by providing healthy, affordable, and culturally relevant food products that the larger corporate stores do not offer such as elk, deer, fish, seafood, plants, medicines, etc. The grocery co-operative will also function as an informal community gathering space where Squamish Nation members can come together to hang out and share. Hi'yám Housing will engage with the community on the operational structure of the co-op.

Sustainability

As an entity created by the Squamish Nation, Hi'yám Housing Society will adhere to the Squamish Nation's goals for sustainability identified in the Nation's Strategic Plan. This includes the notion that land and water are spiritual and have human-like qualities. It is therefore necessary to treat land and water with the same respect as one would treat a person.

Accomplishing this goal of being leaders in sustainability, Step Code 4 for this project will be realized. Designers wishing to achieve Step 4 more rigorous energy efficiency and airtightness requirements will need to reconsider multiple practices and systems buildings built to higher energy efficiency standard have been shown to provide multiple co-benefits, to home and building owners and occupants, to industry, to the environment, and to the community. To achieve the upper steps, builders and designers will need to adopt a more integrated approach to building design and may need to incorporate more substantial changes in building design, layout, framing techniques, system selection, and materials. The British Columbia energy step code represents an important milestone for energy efficient buildings and climate leadership.

In addition, the Xwemelch'stn Housing Project will have community garden spaces, urban agriculture space, and planting throughout the site will be comprised of native species with a focus on edible plants and medicinals, supporting cultural practices. Both the urban agriculture and edible plants that are harvested can, in turn, support food security for the residents. There will also be community composting, which will create a sustainable source of fertilization for the urban garden.

Employment and Training Opportunities

Hiyám Housing will work with the Nation and community to create employment and training opportunities for membership. As this project is to be located on Squamish Nation lands, it was important to procure a general contractor that had a willingness and strategy for hiring Squamish Nation members. Ventana Construction previously completed a construction project on Squamish Nation's traditional territory and, in doing so, prioritized the hiring of Squamish Nation member-owned businesses as sub-contractors. Recruitment of Squamish Nation members for employment will be ongoing and continue throughout construction as required

Background Hiyám Housing

In August of 2018, Squamish Nation Council approved the development of a Squamish Nation Housing Society. The reasons for the creation of the Hiyám ta Skwxwú7mesh Housing Society included the lack of suitable on-reserve housing to accommodate membership, the fact that housing was identified as the number one priority by many Squamish Nation members, and also to take advantage of funding opportunities — particularly new funding from BC Housing, which is offering support for on-reserve housing for the first time in BC under the current provincial government.

For that reason, the acute housing need and the short window of the funding opportunity, Hiyám Housing quickly moved on this chance to address the housing crisis by applying for this funding to build an innovative, mid-density affordable housing project for the Squamish community. We acknowledge there is still a great deal of work that needs to be accomplished to move this project forward, but this is great start.

Huy chexw a! (Thank you - Skwxwú7mesh),

Sarah Silva, CEO
Hiyám Housing Society

If you have any questions about this Xwemelch'stn Housing Project or Hiyám Housing Society, please email info@Hiyamhousing.com.

