

# Opinion mixed over proposed 10-storey East Van detox and social housing complex

City of Vancouver staff recommending application go to public hearing.



City of Vancouver staff are recommending a 10-storey, mixed use and addictions care complex go to public hearing.

City of Vancouver staff are recommending [a rezoning application](#) to build a mixed-use housing and addictions care complex on a block of land between Clark and McLean drives along East First Avenue, [go to public hearing](#).

Councillors vote on the recommendation at the Jan. 29 council meeting.

***article continues below***

The complex, which has attracted both praise and criticism since it was proposed, would be built at 1636 Clark Dr. and 1321-1395 East First Ave.

It would be three to four storeys spanning most of the block between Clark and McLean drives, but rise to 10 storeys for the portion of the building facing Clark Drive and six storeys for the portion facing McLean Drive.



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The project includes 90 social housing units; social enterprise space to support Indigenous healing and wellness and community economic development; and a withdrawal centre that would feature 51 in-patient withdrawal management treatment beds, out-patient and home-based withdrawal management services, a sobering centre to keep people safe while they withdraw from substances, 20 short-term transitional beds, and an academic teaching, research and learning centre.

BC Housing is expected to rent about 50 per cent of the housing units to

households below the BC Housing Income Limits (HILs) levels, with the remaining rented at CMHC private rental market rates for Vancouver.

City staff concluded the application meets the intent of the Grandview-Woodland Community Plan and objectives of the Housing Vancouver Strategy.

But some critics say it's too big, it's in the wrong location and it's serving too many purposes that should be spread out through other neighbourhoods. Others argue it will produce much needed housing and services for people in need.

Abundant Housing Vancouver (AHV), a pro-housing group, is firmly behind the proposal.

Reilly Wood, a director of the organization, said it “strongly” approves of the plan and rallied support at open houses, on social media and through [a letter generator](#) on its website.

“Eighty-seven people have used our website to tell the city that we should approve this project right away, and we hope the city listens,” he told the *Courier* in an email.

“This one building will provide 90 new social housing units and 20 withdrawal recovery beds. If we're serious about tackling Vancouver's housing and opiate crises, it's a no-brainer. Many opponents have said that it's too big — but can social housing really be 'too big' in a housing crisis?”



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The Grandview Woodland Area Council outlined its concerns about the project in a letter sent to the mayor and council last December. The community group backs “community-based and community-scaled detox in all Vancouver neighbourhoods,” but says it’s against amalgamating several major detox facilities at the location.

GWAC chairperson Dana Cromie calls combining detox services and social housing in a residential neighbourhood “a bit of an experiment.”

“If the experiment doesn’t work, they’ve basically spent all their money and we’ve got this thing in our neighbourhood that doesn’t work. That’s a big concern,” he said.

Cromie added that the neighbourhood is “generally very pro-detox” but such services should be in all communities, rather than having large facilities in a few centralized locations.

“GWAC board is not NIMBY. We would take detox, but why are we taking

detox for the whole city? That doesn't make sense to us," he said.  
"Centralization doesn't make sense in this day and age."

While GWAC supports the number of proposed housing units, it believes the building is big and bulky and should conform to what's outlined in the neighbourhood's community plan.

The organization also questions the inclusion of the sobering centre in the building over concerns clients will be brought from all parts of the city and then, after a few hours, will be released into the neighbourhood.

Although GWAC supports the idea of the social enterprise centre, it argues that's not a good enough reason to justify including all the other aspects of the facility.

"We don't support the idea [that] having a 3,700-square-foot social enterprise justifies building a 10-storey building on top of it," he said.

"We support some of all the aspects of [proposal] but together it's too much. And it's a very, very expensive experiment. Our biggest concern is if it really doesn't work, we're left with this huge elephant and there won't be any money to build anything else."

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