



CANADA MORTGAGE AND HOUSING CORPORATION

PROJECT PROFILE

Pacific Coast Apartments

Vancouver, British Columbia



Nearly 100 people in an area of Vancouver, where homelessness is a significant issue, now have access to safe, affordable and supportive housing with the opening of Pacific Coast Apartments. The small-suite demonstration site is showing that affordable housing helps at-risk people stabilize their lives so they

Highlights

Pacific Coast Apartments in Vancouver is a demonstration project that provides 96 compact, affordable apartment suites with support services for people who were homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

Client group: Homeless youth and adults, people with mental illness, HIV/AIDS or addictions

Developer: Coast Mental Health

Number of units: 96 studio suites

Tenure: Rental

Who was involved? Government of Canada (CMHC), Government of B.C. (BC Housing), City of Vancouver, Coast Mental Health

can begin to address other issues that may be affecting their health and well-being.

“We’ve seen a huge change in the year since we opened,” said Darrell Burnham, Executive Director of Coast Mental Health, which developed the project with support from the federal, provincial and municipal governments. “If you don’t have safe, affordable and stable housing, it’s very difficult to move forward in your life. Tenants have good housing,

less stress, regular meals, medication and support. They are happier, healthier and more engaged in the community. For some people, it’s even increased their life expectancy.”

The Affordable Housing Solution

The nine-storey Pacific Coast Apartments building, which opened in May 2011, was designed as a small-suite demonstration site in order to accommodate more

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people in the space available. The suites are up to 25 per cent smaller than average bachelor apartments and are available in three sizes, ranging from 21 to 37 square metres (225 to 400 square feet). In addition to 96 studio apartments, the building includes large common areas for socializing, support and programs for people who were homeless or at risk of homelessness.

The project was funded through the Canada–British Columbia Affordable Housing Program. The Government of Canada invested approximately \$5.5 million to support the construction of Pacific Coast Apartments. The Government of B.C. provided a grant of \$12.6 million, and contributes close to \$1.2 million in annual operating funding. The City of Vancouver provided the land, valued at \$1.95 million, and reduced development fees for the project by \$331,000.

Coast Mental Health has a 60-year lease on the property, at a cost of \$1 per year. This is one of 14 sites the City has provided for affordable housing developments.

Construction of the Pacific Coast Apartments began in March 2010 and took 14 months to complete. The building is located west of Gastown,

CMHC Contact

Contact a representative of CMHC's Affordable Housing Centre
www.cmhc.ca/contactahc

on the crest of a hill near the Pacific Ocean that provides spectacular mountain views. The narrow lot posed logistical challenges for design and construction, as did the need to accommodate plumbing and utilities for so many small suites. Nevertheless, the building was designed to LEED® Gold standards and features rooftop solar panels, high-efficiency windows, a high-efficiency ventilation system and an airtight building envelope. In addition to their environmental benefits, these features enhance occupant well-being and lower long-term operating costs.

"Suite size has not been an issue for tenants," Burnham said.

"Many of them have come from shelters or single room hotels with a bathroom down the hall. The difference is night and day. Some run out of money before the end of the month. A daily dinner is provided as part of their monthly rent. We have many active programs, and tenants use the common spaces, decks and garden area daily."

All tenants live on a fixed allowance of \$375 per month. Coast Mental Health Society has partnership arrangements with Inner City Youth and the STOP HIV/AIDS Team to provide services and support to tenants.

Before he moved into his new suite in Pacific Coast Apartments, Daniel "Tida" Arcand had lived in two rooming houses for a year.

"There was a lot of noise, drugs and bugs," Arcand recalled. "When they told me about this new place being built, I jumped on it. I love it here. It's quiet, and there are people to help us. There's more security for the tenants—if there's any problems, they act on it."

Arcand works part time at Pacific Coast Apartments, sweeping around the building and washing windows. "For me, the apartment is okay. I keep it clean and don't want it too big. I have all I need," he added.