

1002 Vancouver Street Mount Edwards Court Transitional Housing Neighbourhood Relations Framework

Phone: 778-265-3456

www.CoolAid.org/mtedwards

Vision

Neighbours of the 1000 block of Vancouver Street, including: existing residents and businesses in the surrounding area; Cathedral School staff, student and parent community; Christ Church Cathedral staff and parishioners; and transitional housing residents; will be welcome and may enjoy comfort, safety and respect in their neighbourhood.

Goal of the Framework

To provide a means for interested parties to work effectively together to achieve the vision during this one year period that Mount Edwards Court will be operating as transitional housing.

Principles

- Speak and listen clearly and honestly,
- Work together to address concerns and solve problems in a positive and timely manner,
- Be respectful of all neighbours and engage them in resolving issues, and
- Commit to following through on agreed upon actions.

Context

The Province and Victoria Cool Aid Society have partnered to open a new temporary housing facility for 38 individuals at 1002 Vancouver Street from February 2016 to March 31, 2017.

The facility will be operated by Cool Aid, a non-profit society, who will manage the building and provide 24/7 support services, accommodation, storage, daily meals and non-clinical supports to its 38 residents, as well as connecting facility users to health and social services. This is neither an emergency shelter nor a drop in program. It will serve as a transitional home to connect residents to appropriate and long-term housing options. During this temporary period housing and support services will be provided on the first floor only.

The temporary service being provided at Mount Edwards Court is part of a more comprehensive suite of services intended to address the population of people experiencing homelessness who have taken up residence on the nearby court house lawn, located at Burdett and Quadra Street.

It is recognized that there is anxiety in the neighbourhood about what the long term use of Mount Edwards Court will be. While the building is in use for short-term, transitional housing, Cool Aid will be leading a public process with the community and the City of Victoria to confirm the long-term use of Mount Edwards Court for permanent housing. The Province, Cool Aid and the City of Victoria have all committed to undertake a public rezoning process.

Furthermore, Cool Aid has committed to creating a process for dialogue with neighbours, the Cathedral school and Cathedral representatives before bringing forward a plan for rezoning. This process will begin once the current operation has had some time to settle into a routine.

There have been concerns expressed about the potential for individuals being drawn to the area gathering on sidewalks, boulevards and school grounds, openly using and selling drugs and engaging in vandalism and theft, thus, generally contributing to unhealthy and unsafe conditions in the neighbourhood. The existence of the Tent City on the courthouse lawn is recognized as an exacerbating factor to these conditions. It is recognized that these concerns have increased due to the perceived and real impacts in the neighbourhood as a result of the opening of this facility.

Social issues are a reality and a shared community responsibility. Services such as those provided by Victoria Cool Aid Society are recognized as necessary and valuable in assisting vulnerable populations. Provision of such services may be accompanied by public disturbances, calling upon residents, social agencies, provincial agencies and the City to ensure negative impacts to public and private property are minimized or eliminated.

It is recognized that a Neighbourhood Relations Framework may help to manage social issues to reduce or eliminate their impacts on the immediate area, but will not address the root causes (poverty, addictions, mental illness, homelessness), nor will it address some of the law enforcement challenges related to illegal activities. It is also recognized that given the presence of Tent City and the proximity of the neighbourhood to the downtown area, incidents that may occur should not necessarily, nor automatically, be attributed to the residents of Mount Edwards Court.

This framework is intended to provide a means for neighbours to work with Cool Aid to identify actions they can take with respect to the management of Mount Edwards Court that can contribute to the safety and well-being of the neighbourhood.

Neighbour Group Participants

This framework is not a legal document or binding agreement. It sets out a means to guide the dialogue process between Cool Aid and neighbours – residents, businesses and institutions – in proximity to the 1000 block of Vancouver Street at Rockland.

In addition to participation from individual residents (including those living at Mount Edwards), representatives from Cathedral School and Christ Church Cathedral, the City of Victoria, Victoria Police Department, Victoria Cool Aid Society, BC Housing, and Fairfield Gonzales Community Association, have all agreed to attend Neighbour Group meetings and to participate in initiatives to improve the safety and livability of the 1000 block on Vancouver St. and the surrounding neighbourhood.

The Neighbour Group will meet regularly as needed to maintain regular communication and discuss emergent and ongoing issues.

Victoria Cool Aid Society will provide coordination and facilitation services to the Neighbour Group.

Neighbour group participants acknowledge that there are many neighbors who oppose the creation of this Framework and who do not support the vision behind it. The Neighbour Group encourages continued dialogue with all parties particularly around neighbourhood issues directly connected to the operations of Mount Edwards.

Commitments of the Neighbour Group

All the participants will work to:

- Ensure that crime whether on public or private property is reported and that law enforcement is called promptly,
- Respond to concerns and participate in joint, cooperative initiatives as agreed to from time to time,
- Address issues as and when they arise in a timely manner, and
- Communicate proactively on neighbourhood matters.

In addition:

Victoria Cool Aid Society (supported by BC Housing) will:

- Take appropriate action to deal with any resident who causes disruption at the school and in the immediate neighbourhood,
- Support the school with respect to security and the well-being of students, parents, teachers and other staff,
- Keep the Mount Edwards Court building and grounds clean and in good condition,
- Promptly make any repairs needed and remove graffiti,

- Consider modifications to the exterior of their buildings to discourage loitering and camping (e.g. enhanced exterior lighting), and
- Assist in engaging the transitional housing residents to participate in the activities and initiatives of the neighbourhood.

The Victoria Police Department will:

- Provide a dedicated Community Resource Officer to respond to the needs of the neighbourhood,
- Provide increased visible presence in the general area of the transitional housing facility where a specific need exists and staffing levels and call load permit,
- Work collaboratively with members of the neighbourhood to address issues that may arise,
- Provide crime prevention information and advice to any member of the neighbourhood, and
- Work together to ensure that effective and appropriate police resources and activities are maintained in the neighborhood around the Mount Edwards Court Transitional Housing facility.

Contact Information:

Mount Edwards Court:

24 hour phone: 778-265-3456

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VicPD:

Non-emergency: 250-995-7654

Emergency: 911