



March 22, 2011

Social housing to be included with new Downtown Eastside/Strathcona Library Branch

A new Downtown Eastside/Strathcona Library branch will include affordable housing for single mothers and their children above the library, the City of Vancouver, Vancouver Public Library and YWCA Vancouver announced today.

"This project will be a wonderful legacy in Vancouver and meets two major City priorities," said Mayor Gregor Robertson. "It expands social housing for women and children and establishes the first full-service Library branch in the Downtown Eastside/Strathcona neighbourhood, a need our Council has been working with the Library to address for a number of years."

The agencies will develop a full-service Downtown Eastside/Strathcona Branch with an additional four floors of housing on the site at 720-730 East Hastings Street, just east of Heatley Street.

"The Library Board and management believe the YWCA housing vision for this site is an ideal fit for the Library, which has a strong mandate to support children and families," said City Librarian Sandra Singh.

"Downtown Eastside, Strathcona and Chinatown residents have been waiting a long time for a full-service Library branch and we are delighted the project is now underway," she added.

"The YWCA is delighted to be a partner in this innovative project, which builds on our long history in the community," said Janet Austin, CEO of YWCA Vancouver.

"The project will provide up to 20 units of housing and support services for single mothers and their children and will be named YWCA Cause We Care House, in recognition of substantial support from our lead donor, Cause We Care Foundation."

Ms. Austin also acknowledged the generous support of the Streethome Foundation and the Ismaili Muslim community of B.C.

Representatives of the three funding organizations said they are extremely pleased to be involved in the Library-YWCA project.

"As we learn more about the needs of single mothers living in poverty, we realize that housing is the most critical means of change. Cause We Care is committed to helping these women and their children, and when we work with the YWCA, we know that our efforts will make a

tremendous difference in the long run. We are honoured to be a part of this meaningful project," said Andrea Thomas Hill, Chair, Cause We Care Foundation.

"Streethome Foundation is keenly aware of the housing challenges facing single mothers who are at risk of homelessness," said Dick Vollet, CEO of Streethome Foundation. "This group is a priority for Streethome support, and we're very pleased to be involved in a project with the City of Vancouver, Vancouver Public Library and the YWCA, who have a strong history of success and experience in this area."

Samira Alibhai, President of the Ismaili Council for B.C. said: "The Ismaili Muslim community of B.C. has a long history of partnerships with diverse organizations in Vancouver to further the mandate of partner organizations and to give back to the local community. We are pleased to be partnering with the YWCA in this vital initiative to provide women with a foundation for success."

The full-service neighbourhood Library branch will include: books, magazines, newspapers, CDs, DVDs and electronic resources in multiple languages; opening hours and diverse programming to meet community needs; public access to computers and wireless Internet; and meeting rooms and other public spaces to serve the community.

The Library conducted extensive community consultation leading up to Council's approval last October of the new branch and consultation will continue throughout the design and development phases of the Library branch and social housing components.

Building design work will begin in April 2011 and the Library will include construction costs in its 2012 Capital Plan submission to the City. The Library branch and housing is expected to open in late 2014.

Please see attached backgrounder for detailed information.

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Media contacts:

City of Vancouver
Corporate Communications
604.871.6336
media@vancouver.ca

Vancouver Public Library
Jean Kavanagh
Manager, Marketing & Communications
604.331.3895; cell: 604.612.4059
jean.kavanagh@vpl.ca

YWCA Vancouver
Chantelle Krish
Public Relations Manager
604.895.5767; cell: 778.938.9544
ckrish@ywcavan.org