

Student Housing at the Comox Valley Campus Status Report to the Board of Governors June 13th, 2019

Background

Since the November 2018 update, the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) has substantially advanced the development of the business case for student housing at the Comox Valley in the following five areas:

1. Consultations (internal and external)
2. Building programming
3. Site selection and servicing
4. Architectural services
5. Procurement model

Following a short summary of the project, this report outlines the progress achieved in each of these areas.

Based on Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training's (AEST) current requirements and NIC's completion targets, we are projecting a later Fall/early Winter date for submission of the business case. Between now and then, the College will continue to have ongoing, substantive discussion with them that may affect these timelines.

Project Description

NIC intends to build 168 beds of single and family housing in two separate, fully furnished and serviced facilities at its Comox Valley campus. These living and learning communities will provide accessible housing to students on a range of tenures with the goal of increasing successful participation in post-secondary education and skills training. The Comox Valley region has an extremely low vacancy rate of 0.5% and housing insecurity is a barrier to some students successfully accessing and completing NIC programs. Students from more remote areas of the College's service area and the province are particularly challenged by issues related to the lack of affordable, secure and supportive housing.

The Student Housing Planning & Advisory Committee's mission statement for its housing project is as follows:

Student Housing at North Island College Comox Valley Campus supports the College's commitment to safe, inclusive, engaged, learning experiences that promote accessibility, enhance community engagement, and nurture student success.

The Senior Leadership Team has undertaken considerable research and preparation in its consideration of on-campus student housing, including the NIC Campus Master Plan (2013), Student Housing Feasibility Study (2014), and an updated Market and Demand Analysis (2018). The February 2019 Provincial Housing Strategy which aims to build 8,000 new student housing

units over the next ten years, provides an opportunity for the College to access funding to develop its first on-campus student housing. A grant and low interest loan from the province is necessary to the viability of the project.

On-campus student housing project will cost approximately \$24-30 million to build. It will be funded by grant funding of approximately 50% of the total project cost, with debt financing and college resources funding the balance.

In response to iterative feedback from the AEST, SLT is currently advancing the development of its business case for Student Housing to meet the Ministry's requirement for schematic design with Class C estimates. Schematic design identifies the functional requirements and the arrangement of space at a detailed level, both within and between spaces. It establishes the layout for the site, floor layouts for the buildings, and confirms the assumptions in the functional program. It also identifies the type and method of supporting building systems (plumbing, heating, cooling, etc.) including how the physical space might impact user experience, flow of movement, and space planning. The schematic design process also usually outlines the room size, creates the exterior look or massing of the building, and establishes a high level overview of how the building will operate with respect to support rooms (laundry, electrical and mechanical rooms). This information is detailed enough to calculate a Class "C" estimate which confirms the full costs of the project to within a range of -10% to +25%.

1. Consultations

Student Housing Planning and Advisory Group (SHPAG)

The College's Senior Leadership Team is being advised by a group of approximately 44 faculty, staff, administrators and students. Now that we are at the stage of developing a schematic design for Student Housing, four subcommittees have been created to advise on this work. Per the terms of reference, these committees report back to the main SHPAG. These four committees and their areas of responsibility are:

- **Built Environment** - Site selection, design, architecture, landscaping, parking, accessibility (gender neutrality, physical accessibility), and procurement model.
- **Campus Connections** - Academic connections to housing, public spaces, walkways, childcare and play areas, recreation, community partners, transportation, connections to neighbours, businesses and services.
- **Environmental** - Flora and fauna, energy, recycling, waste management, green practices.
- **Operations** - Policy and procedures, frameworks for student housing operations. Possible subgroup areas: campus life, IT, food.

In addition, the NIC Aboriginal Education Council (AEC) provides oversight on all aspects relating to indigenization of the project.

All of the sub-committees are actively meeting and guiding the work outlined below. At NIC, there is a tremendous breadth of internal expertise in many areas pertinent to the project and it is energizing to come together as a team with one goal.

Community Consultations

NIC values being a good neighbor and working with community partners. At this point in the development of the business case, members of the Senior Leadership Team have participated in consultations with the following community partners:

- Beaufort Children's Centre
- Island Health
- Comox Valley Schools
- K'ómoks First Nation – Charlene Everson (AEC Chair) and Tina Lawson, Band Administrator
- K'ómoks First Nation Chief and Council
- Canadian Forces Base: 19 Wing Comox
- Comox Valley Chamber of Commerce

Each of our partners is very supportive of the project and we have plans to collaborate with them in different ways.

2. Building Programming

To refine the initial work of the Scion Housing Group, the Senior Leadership Team has engaged Patty Beatty-Guenther to write the design brief for the Student Housing project. While refinement will be ongoing, the document has been substantially drafted and reviewed by the SPHAG subcommittees as well as college administrative bodies. It is attached.

Housing Concept

Based on research as well as surveys and consultation with students and the community, the following student housing requirements have been identified:

- 148 beds for single students
- 20 units for students with families (in a separate building)
- Kitchen, laundry and study facilities along with other amenities
- Mix of tenures: 12-month leases with shorter leases for short duration students, e.g. trades
- Rents by the bed: utilities included, basic furniture package, high speed internet, cable TV
- There will be at least an additional 4 staff units and 3 units for visiting family to rent. One of these units should always be available for a student/person in distress and needing a room.
- A common space, with adjacent offices, will be built in each complex

Space Configuration

A group of 10 members from the Student Housing Planning & Advisory Committee visited student housing facilities at Vancouver Island University and University of Victoria on April 15th, 2019. Colin Fowler, Vice President Finance & Facilities also had an opportunity to visit Okanagan College on May 28th, 2019. Learning of the popularity of single rooms, the number of these units has been increased to 32 from 20.

To avoid too much cooking in the apartments, central kitchens are the focus. In addition, there will need to be fully equipped apartments for people with physical limitations with full cooking ability.

Indigenization is a key theme of the housing project. Guided by resources provided by the Aboriginal Housing Management Association, the Senior Leadership Team has extensively consulted with the Aboriginal Education Council and K'ómoks First Nations on the project. Their feedback has guided the overall design.

Site Selection and Servicing

The Senior Leadership Team commissioned Urban Systems, a local land use planning and engineering company, to assist with selecting a site for student housing. In addition to evaluating the two sites identified in the Comox Valley 2013 Master Plan, Urban Systems also explored the option of a third site beside the Trades building toward providing more separation between single and family housing. Their process included considerations of land use planning, parking, infrastructure servicing, and site conditions (e.g. environmental, geotechnical, tree removal, etc.). The report included a site selection matrix which was developed to provide the background information and analysis required to compare the two sites to assess their suitability for future student housing development.

Their work was based on the following considerations

- separate buildings for single students and family accommodation
- building orientation and construction (e.g. passive house design)
- CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) guidelines
- accessibility to and through the buildings
- gender neutral design considerations
- indigenized design
- creation of a culturally safe area for residents
- open space opportunities (e.g. community gathering space, play areas for children, community garden)

Collaboration and coordination with K'ómoks First Nation is an integral part of the building and site design process. On December 19, 2018, the project team met with representatives from K'ómoks First Nation to discuss design considerations in coordination with the Nation's interest, and to undertake a site tour of both potential student housing locations. Based on the site tour and discussions, it was noted that the overall location of NIC's Comox Valley Campus likely did not impact any known important historical or cultural lands of the K'ómoks First Nation, and that either proposed student housing site would be acceptable to the Nation. K'ómoks First Nation requested any timber that is felled as a result of the project and the Senior Leadership Team is happy to make this gift.

Following the examination of a number of options prepared by Urban Systems, it was decided to site both student and family housing beside the Aquatic Centre. It was determined that the Aquatic Centre site had more advantages as a location for all housing – both single student and families. The other site identified by the Comox Valley Master Plan (2013) was deemed unsuitable due to size and servicing considerations. See Figure 1 below.

Comox Valley Student Housing

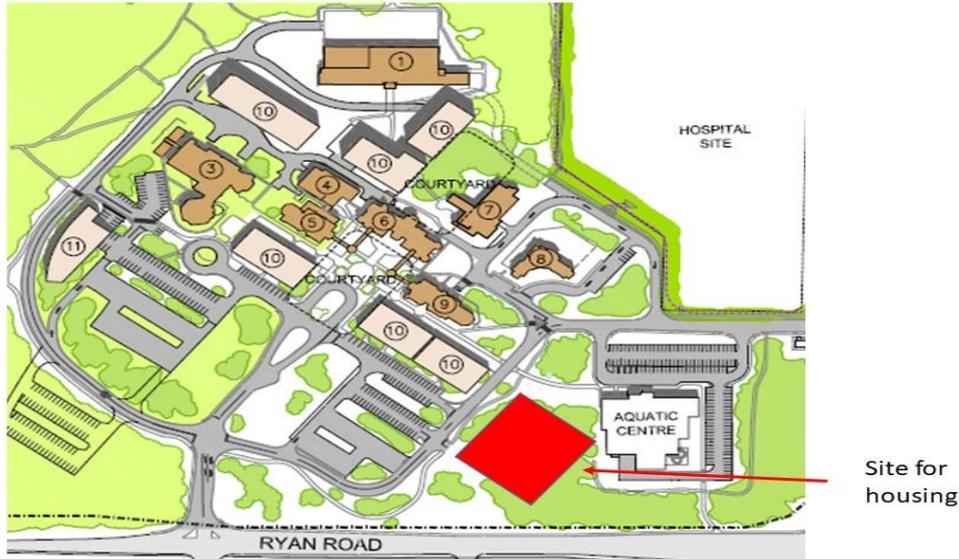


Figure 1. Site for Student Housing at Comox Valley campus

City of Courtenay Zoning Bylaw

Based on general consistency with the City’s Official Community Plan, an analysis of the current zoning at North Island College was undertaken. The entire NIC Comox Valley Campus is currently zoned PA-3 Public Use and Amenity. Permissible uses include recreation facilities, schools, and accessory day cares. While schools are a permitted use within the PA-3 zone, student housing is not defined nor explicitly permitted within the City’s zoning bylaw. As housing is accessory to NIC’s main educational purpose, the City has confirmed that a rezoning process for student housing is not required.

City of Courtenay Development Permit Areas

Development Permit Areas (DPAs) are a set of development regulations for an area. City staff have clarified that a development permit is not required for NIC student housing as it does not constitute a multi-family housing development in the truest sense, i.e., it is not available to the general public.

Parking

The City of Courtenay requires a parking study as part of the requirement for building permit application. The study anticipates the potential demand created by the project and the impact it will have on existing campus parking in order to determine required parking for student housing. Current zoning for North Island College requires the provision of one parking stall per five students. This parking requirement is consistent with the City of Nanaimo’s parking bylaw which also requires 0.2 stalls per bed within the ‘University District’. However, it is lower than Thompson Rivers University in Kamloops, which uses a ratio of 0.25 stalls per bed (or 1 parking

stall per four students). Given that current parking levels are somewhat limited on campus, Urban Systems recommends that North Island College utilize a parking rate of 0.25 per bedroom (1 stall per 4 student) in the single student housing and 1 stall per unit in the family housing complex.

Trees

North Island College recognizes that a healthy tree canopy contributes to the campus environment. The development of student housing will have potential impacts on the second-growth forested areas, and as such will require additional review and field research in order to prepare an appropriate tree retention and replacement strategy. As part of the City of Courtenay's development approval process, a tree-cutting permit is required. To acquire a tree-cutting permit, the College must employ a certified arborist to analyze the site to determine the species makeup and the number of trees requiring removal. As part of the discussions with City staff, they clarified that the proposed student housing development would be considered "infill". This will result in a 1:1 replacement requirement, for those trees that are larger than 2 cms in diameter at breast height (DBH). In addition, there are six protected species that may not be cut down. The survey will determine if any of these exist on the site. McElhanney has been engaged to do the survey.

3. Architectural Services

In late February, NIC's procurement office posted an Expression of Interest (EOI) for architectural services for schematic design on BC Bid. BC Bid is a marketplace where public sector organizations advertise opportunities for various contracts. The EOI closed on March 21, 2019 and NIC received 17 responses from interested firms. This was short-listed down to four firms; one firm has subsequently removed itself from the process.

A request for proposal (RFP) has been sent to the 3 short-listed firms who will submit proposals to the College to be selected as the firm that will lead the schematic design process. All of the firms have offices in British Columbia and have significant experience designing similarly sized student housing projects. It is expected that detailed schematic design will take approximately 4 months and is estimated to cost between \$500 - \$700K in 2019/20.

4. Procurement Model

The Facilities department has commissioned SSA Quantity Surveyors to carry out the comprehensive project facilitation and quantity surveying services for the student housing project. They will assist the Facilities department with the overall project planning, preparation of project cost estimates, and ensuring the project is delivered on time and on budget. This service will cost \$23K in fiscal 2019/20.

The project will be completed using the Design Build delivery model. Under this method, NIC will hire a single entity that will act as the designer/builder for the project. Aspects of design and construction may be performed by this firm or subcontracted out but the benefit is that this single entity bears the project risk.

The firm that completes the schematic design will stay on with the project as part of the compliance team along with SSA and College staff to ensure the project delivered as is envisioned during schematic design. This will require that detailed design specifications are prepared during the schematic design phase of the project to guide the compliance team during construction.

Timelines

The following is an estimate of the timelines for the project. Project timelines are impacted by decisions at the provincial level regarding the funding for the project. Given no significant decision-making delays at the provincial level, the key milestones for the construction project will be as follows:

Key Milestones	Projected Timeline
Select schematic design architect	July 2019
Complete Schematic design and detailed costing estimates (Class C Estimates)	November 2019
Send updated business case to the Ministry (work will continue on the business case during schematic design)	December 2019
Project Approval from the Ministry and Treasury Board	February 2020
Bid/Tender for general contractor for detailed design and build	March 2020
Construction begins	September 2020
Occupancy	September 2022

Appendix 2: Sample Quad Apartment

Shown below is a drawing of a sample quad apartment.

Source: Stantec.com Bryan Morrison <https://ideas.stantec.com/student-life/student-housing-series-designing-a-home-away-from-home-in-the-golden-state>

