

Group Homes In Richmond

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Introduction

This document has been prepared to provide Richmond residents with information about group homes in the city, and the current policy framework that exists for them.

Group homes offer an important service, providing their residents with short and long-term living arrangements, affordable and safe housing, skills training, peer support, counseling, and other support. They make it possible for people in need to live independently within their community.

What is a group home?

- A voluntary group living arrangement which provides boarding and lodging for persons with special needs arising from physical, mental, developmental, or emotional challenges.
- A residential care environment developed for the personal rehabilitation of its residents through self-help, and professional care and guidance.

What are the categories for group homes?

Group homes which accommodate up to ten residents, fit within the definition of Minor Community Care Facility in the Richmond zoning bylaw. Larger facilities (i.e., those accommodating more than ten persons in care) fit within the definition of Major Community Care Facility and are not considered to be group homes. The City recognizes and has different provisions for four categories of group homes:

1. Licensed Group Home for 3-6 residents.
2. Unlicensed Group Home for 1-6 residents.
3. Licensed Group Home for 7-10 residents.
4. Unlicensed Group Home for 7-10 residents.

See Table 1 for information on City requirements for the various group home types.



The City encourages group homes to follow “Good Neighbour” guidelines, whereby the operators:

- Ensure ongoing contact with the local neighbourhood (at least five houses on each side of the group home) to address issues and concerns in a productive and problem-solving manner, and to provide contacts to address potential problems or issues;
- Undertake maintenance and renovations of the facility according to neighbourhood standards and carried out in the least disruptive manner;
- Maintain ongoing staff contact with the neighbourhood to ensure any issues are immediately resolved;
- Encourage group home residents to become part of the neighbourhood.

Who do group homes serve?

Group homes serve people with a variety of needs, including those requiring care, supervision, educational training, and physical or mental rehabilitative therapy. Residents may include those with a physical or developmental disability, pregnant women, victims of domestic abuse, youth, and people recovering from drug and alcohol addictions.

What facilities are excluded from the group home category?

- Schools
- Correctional centres
- Foster homes
- Detoxification centres
- Hospital Act facilities
- Youth custody centres
- Transition houses
- Mental Health Act facilities (for involuntary admission and treatment)

What are the group home policies and regulations?

Licensed

Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH)-Richmond licenses group homes under provisions of the Provincial Community Care and Assisted Living Act.

Licensed Group Homes accommodate:

- People with mental health issues
- People with mental challenges or other developmental disabilities
- People requiring continuing convalescent care
- People needing hospice services
- Children and youth in need of care
- People recovering from drug and alcohol addictions

Unlicensed Group Homes accommodate:

- Domestic abuse victims
- People recovering from drug and alcohol addictions

NOTE: VCH-Richmond determines whether or not a facility for people in recovery requires a license.

City Approvals

City approval requirements for group homes pertain to building, fire, zoning, and location concerns. Business licenses are required for commercial (for profit) operations.

Summary

See Table 1: “City of Richmond Group Home Planning Framework”.



Why are group homes important?

Group homes are an important community resource, offering both short and long-term living arrangements and program support to their residents. The homes provide affordable and safe housing, skills training, peer support, counseling, and other support, thereby allowing residents to live normal lives in their community.

What is Richmond’s history with group homes?

The City of Richmond has a tradition of inclusiveness and of supporting those with special needs within the community. With the advent of “de-institutionalization”—the philosophy of housing persons needing specialized care in smaller, home-like settings in their communities rather than in large institutions—Richmond received an increasing number of requests from organizations and private operators to establish group homes in various parts of the city in the 1980s and 1990s.

In 1988, there were nine group homes in Richmond. Today there are 30 group homes, a number that has been relatively stable over the last 15 years.

What types of group homes exist in Richmond?

As of May 2011, there were 30 licensed group homes in Richmond, accommodating up to 174 persons as follows:

Licensed Group homes in Richmond:	
21	group homes for people with developmental disabilities with a total of 92 residents
+ 6	mental health facilities with a capacity for a total of 54 residents
+ 1	complex care facility for up to 10 younger adults
+ 1	hospice for 9 residents
+ 1	drug and alcohol recovery home for 9 residents
= 30	group homes in Richmond accommodating up to 174 residents

How are group homes licensed and monitored?

Group homes are licensed under the Community Care and Assisted Living Act. VCH-Richmond administers the Community Care and Assisted Living Act and coordinates applications for group home licenses. On behalf of the province, VCH-Richmond issues approval of licenses to applicants, or rejects them, in consultation with municipal departments and sponsoring agencies, as appropriate.

VCH-Richmond also conducts ongoing monitoring inspections of group homes to ensure compliance with Provincial licensing requirements.

What are the current City of Richmond policies for group homes?

Once an agency, or person, has applied for a Community Care Facility License to operate a group home, the next step is to ensure compliance with City policies related to building safety, zoning and neighbourhood notification and procedures.

In 2001, to help revise the City’s policies concerning group homes, Council authorized the establishment of a Richmond Group Home Task Force. The Task Force met 26 times over a six-month period, with its meetings being open to the public. The Task Force undertook research, held formal meetings, developed a publication to help inform Richmond citizens about group homes, and organized public consultation meetings to gather input from the community. In October 2001, the Task Force submitted its final report and recommendations to Council.

On May 27, 2002, Richmond Council endorsed a set of City policies for licensed and unlicensed group homes. These policies, reflecting minor housekeeping amendments, are summarized in Table 1 on page 5.



Key City Criteria for Support of Group Homes:

- Satisfy zoning, building and fire regulations;
- Location at least 200 metres from other group homes;
- Undertake neighbourhood communication and consultation, as appropriate;
- Comply with good neighbour guidelines.

How are group homes funded?

The majority of funding for licensed and unlicensed group homes is typically provided through senior governments (e.g., Ministry of Children and Family Development, Ministry of Health), which also establish program expectations for the homes.

How are licensed group home residents screened?

The Provincial Residential Care Regulation specifies the following admission screening requirements for group home residents:

Section 47

- (1) Before admitting a person to a community care facility, a licensee must screen the person to ensure the person will receive both safe and adequate care if admitted to the community care facility.
- (2) A licensee must consider, as part of the screening process under subsection (1), all of the following:
 - (a) the training and experience of employees, the number of employees and patterns of employee coverage;
 - (b) the design of the community care facility, its construction, and the facilities and equipment within the community care facility;
 - (c) the needs of the person, including any needs that should be identified specifically in a care plan;
 - (d) the health, safety and dignity of other persons in care;
 - (e) any criteria set by, or advice or information from, a funding program.

In addition, most sponsoring agencies of group homes also screen prospective residents prior to recommending their placement in a facility.

NOTE: *As unlicensed group homes do not provide on-site care, as defined in the Community Care and Assisted Living Act, those facilities are not subject to the above screening requirements.*

What are the qualifications for licensed group home managers?

A prospective group home manager must submit qualification documentation to VCH-Richmond, Community Care Licensing including:

- an application for an assessment of qualifications, including a resume and references;
- a valid first aid certificate;
- a completed criminal record check, as per the Criminal Record Review Act.

The documentation is reviewed and the prospective manager then undergoes a suitability interview.

NOTE: *Unlicensed group homes are not required to submit documentation on their managers' qualifications to VCH-Richmond, as these facilities do not provide on-site care for their residents.*

Table 1: City of Richmond Group Home Planning Framework

Group Homes	Fire & Building Safety	Zoning	Neighbourhood Notification / Information
<p>Licensed Group Home: 3-6 (three to six residents)</p>	<p>Proposed building must meet City fire and building safety requirements for single family homes, and must also contain a sprinkler system, emergency lighting, and fire separation at the garage.</p>	<p>Managed as a residence. Permitted in all districts zoned for residential use.</p>	<p>Not required.</p>
<p>Unlicensed Group Home: 1-6 (one to six residents)</p>	<p>As above.</p>	<p>As above.</p>	<p>Not required.</p>
<p>Licensed Group Home: 7-0 (seven to ten residents)</p>	<p>As above.</p>	<p>Managed as a residence. Permitted in all districts zoned for residential use, provided building is a minimum of 200 metres from another licensed or unlicensed Group Home.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Upon notification by VCH-Richmond that an application for a Licensed Group Home (7-10 residents) has been received, the City writes to neighbours within a five-house radius of the proposed home to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invite them to an informal meeting, hosted by the City in conjunction with VCH-Richmond, to provide information and to solicit comments on the home; Provide them with contact information for designated member of group home operating team, a "fact sheet" about the home, and the "Group Homes in Richmond" publication. The City provides comments on the group home application to VCH-Richmond for information and consideration. VCH-Richmond, at its discretion, issues a Community Care Facility (CCF) License for facility. Nine months after issuance of the CCF License: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The City contacts neighbours within a five-house radius of the facility, in writing, to seek additional comments and feedback on the group home, hosting an additional information meeting for the neighbours, if required; The City conveys comments of VCH-Richmond for information and consideration.
<p>Unlicensed Group Home: 7-0 (seven to ten residents)</p>	<p>As above.</p>	<p>As above.</p>	<p>Upon the City receiving an application for an Unlicensed Group Home (7-10 residents) the City writes to neighbours within a five-house radius of the proposed home to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invite them to an informal meeting to provide information and to solicit comments on the home; Provide them with contact information for designated member of facility operating team, a "fact sheet" about the home, and the "Group Homes in Richmond" publication.
<p>Institutional Facility 10+ (more than ten persons in care) <i>NOTE: These are not group homes.</i></p>	<p>Proposed building must meet Assembly Occupancy Standards of the National Building Code.</p>	<p>Managed as an institution. Rezoning likely required to accommodate institutional use.</p>	<p>Rezoning includes neighbourhood notification and public hearing process.</p>



What is the likely impact of group homes on the neighbourhood?

Home ownership is perhaps the most significant investment made by an individual or family. All homeowners seek assurance that their investment is secure. They also want assurance that if and when they decide to sell, their property value will be optimal. Some homeowners are concerned that property values will be negatively affected by the presence of group homes. While studies have not been conducted in Richmond itself, research in other jurisdictions suggest that a negative impact on home values is unlikely.

- In 1990 the Council of Planning Librarians published a document which reviewed 56 varied research studies in Canada and the United States dealing with the effects of group homes and treatment facilities on the neighbourhood in which they were placed. The accumulated evidence suggested that the presence of group homes in all the areas studied had not lowered property values or increased turnover, had not increased crime, and had not changed the character of the neighbourhood. The homes had not deteriorated or become conspicuous landmarks. Communities came to accept the group homes, and residents of the home benefited from access to community life.

Source: "There Goes the Neighbourhood..."—A summary of studies addressing the most often expressed fears about the effects of group homes on neighbourhoods in which they are placed published by Council of Planning Librarians—CPL Bibliography 259.

- In 1995, the BC Ministry of Housing commissioned a study under the direction of the "NIMBY" (Not In My Back Yard) Task Group to study the impact of five non-market family townhouse developments and two group homes on the property value of surrounding homes. The seven locations studied throughout BC included Nanaimo, Surrey, North Vancouver, Kelowna, Victoria, Vancouver, and Esquimalt. In all seven cases, the appraisers found no evidence that the presence of the townhouse development or special needs homes negatively affected the sale price of homes in the immediate area. There was also no evidence of panic selling of surrounding homes or extraordinary lengths of time between the dates of listing and sale for homes that were sold.

Source: Toward More Inclusive Neighbourhoods—Property Values Unaffected by Non-Market Housing. Province of BC. 1995.

Source: Recreation and Consumer Services, 1995.

www.housing.gov.bc.ca/housing/neighbour/publications/p-value1.htm

**For more information,
please call the City of
Richmond at 604-276-4000**

Although every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the information contained in this publication, you should confirm all information with the City of Richmond before making any decisions regarding the establishment of group homes in the city.