



## **Mount Edwards Court FAQ Questions Answered**

**Question:** The BC Government has announced they intend to open up 60 more apartments at Mount Edwards Court. Is that a good idea?

**Answer:** First off, the plan for the first year, until April 2017, has not changed -- and that is to house and support up to 38 people who were formerly homeless and find them permanent housing within the year.

What happens after that is still subject to a public rezoning process that the Province, Cool Aid and the City of Victoria have all committed to undertake.

Furthermore, Cool Aid has committed to creating a process for dialogue with neighbours, school and Cathedral representatives before bringing forward a plan for rezoning. We need some time for the current operation to settle into a routine before we start this process.

After the rezoning process is completed, the neighbourhood will know with certainty what the long-term use of Mount Edwards Court will be.

**Question:** How will you find permanent homes for the people now living in Mount Edwards Court, when there are so few vacant apartments in Victoria and considering how expensive they are?

**Answer:** This question underscores the fact that there are currently not enough affordable rentals in the Capital Region. In the long term, the solution is continued construction of permanent affordable and supportive housing by all levels of government.

In the short term, Cool Aid is committed to finding permanent homes by April 2017 for the 38 residents who are now living in Mount Edwards Court. We will do this by moving some of the residents who need a higher level of support into our other ten apartment buildings, some into apartments operated by other non-profit organizations, and some into regular "market" apartments by subsidizing their rental costs and providing on-site support as needed.

Cool Aid's long-term goal is, with community support, to build 360 more supportive housing apartments to help address this critical community need. This is the focus of our housing capital campaign. (Cool Aid has 45 apartments currently under construction in Saanich for seniors who are homeless.)

**Question:** Are guests allowed at Mount Edwards Court?

**Answer:** At the present time, while the residents settle into their new homes, Cool Aid is not allowing guests into the building who are not residents' family members or helping professionals.

Most of Cool Aid's other ten apartment buildings do accept guests, provided those guests are not creating a disturbance within the building or neighbourhood.

Cool Aid hopes that within a few months that Mount Edwards residents will also be able to invite guests into their homes. Access into the building will always be controlled by staff (i.e. locked) to ensure that only welcomed guests can get in.

**Question:** I know a lot of street people have pets. Do you allow pets at Mount Edwards Court or any of your other ten apartment buildings?

**Answer:** Pets are very important to people who have been homeless which is why most Cool Aid properties, including Mount Edwards, welcome our client's pets.

In fact, one of Cool Aid's supporters is the Sooke Animal Food and Rescue Society (SAFARS), whose donors provide a significant amount of food for pets who are living with Cool Aid clients.

**Question:** Are the people living at Mount Edwards Court employed?

**Answer:** It might surprise neighbours to learn that a significant number of people who live in Cool Aid housing, including Mount Edwards, have regular jobs, as well as casual work. (This is also true of people staying in emergency shelters, like Rock Bay Landing and Sandy Merriman House.)

As well, Cool Aid has a longstanding policy of providing employment training opportunities for residents who want to gain some skills and earn a bit of money. Their janitorial contributions help build community and pride within the apartment buildings as well as providing new skills.

Other Cool Aid programs also provide employment training and placement opportunities for our residents and other clients:

- Cool Aid's Community Casual Labour Pool provides a free placement service for employers and casual workers who are available, trained and ready to work.
- The Downtown Community Centre, operated by Cool Aid at 755 Pandora Avenue near City Hall, provides employment training opportunities, lifeskills courses and healthy recreation opportunities for our residents and others. The free Community Kitchen program, for example, provides training in nutrition, food purchasing, preparation and storage, and leads to a Food Safe certification for participants.

- The Beacon Services-Cool Aid Thrift Shop at 715 Pandora Avenue provides Cool Aid clients with employment training opportunities in retail operations as well as an inexpensive place to purchase clothing, household goods and other needed essentials.

**Questions:** What are your expectations of the residents?

**Answers:** At Mount Edwards Court, there is a dedicated staff person who works with the residents on developing and implementing their own personal plans for community integration. This could include, for example, goals and strategies to find permanent housing, employment, addiction treatment and improved health care.

Different people have different levels of success in improving their situation and resolving challenges.

At minimum, Cool Aid requires that all residents behave in appropriate ways both in the building and the neighbourhood. Any resident that is unable to be a good neighbour will be asked and assisted to help change any antisocial behaviours. If they are unsuccessful, the person may be moved to another building or evicted if necessary.

**Question:** What are the expected outcomes for your residents?

**Answer:** Cool Aid's agreement with the Province is quite clear about the expected outcomes for our residents. We are required to find permanent housing and any necessary supports that are needed for all 38 of our Mount Edwards residents and have them moved out not later than April 2017. During that process, Cool Aid will also support them in a variety of ways to improve their wellbeing, including help in locating employment, addiction treatment and improved health care.

**Question:** What is your screening criteria for Mount Edwards residents?

**Answer:** The screening process is a complex one that includes:

- the use of a vulnerability assessment tool
- interviewing the prospective tenants
- talking with our staff, other service providers and helping professionals who know the candidates, and
- weighing their suitability for the current mix of residents in the building

The goal is to create a mix of residents that is balanced and manageable, while providing a high level of support for those who need it.

**Question:** Why don't you do Criminal Record checks on prospective tenants? How can you ensure that sex offenders are screened out?

In British Columbia, landlords and property managers acting on their behalf must adhere to the privacy rules contained in the BC Personal Information Protection Act ("PIPA"). These guidelines are intended to assist landlords and property managers in discharging their duties under the Residential Tenancy Act ("RTA") in a manner that respects the privacy of tenants and promotes transparency in the operation of landlord and tenant relationships.

A landlord cannot as a condition of renting or providing any service to a tenant, ask for consent to collect personal information beyond what is necessary to provide tenancy or that service. Requiring a criminal records check is not reasonably necessary.

Sex offenders are on strict orders that prohibit them from being in areas where children are in close proximity. They must report their address to their probation / parole officer who would preclude them from residing at Mount Edwards; or indeed any apartment building in close proximity to Cathedral School.

**Question:** Does Cool Aid have any measurable results or evidence to show that your programs and services are successful?

Yes, Cool Aid utilizes a Balanced Scorecard methodology to measure our progress towards meeting our strategic objectives and reports out annually to the community.