

The Province

Milestones on the road to a better Downtown Eastside; Operation phoenix timeline

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Some of the key developments affecting the Downtown Eastside since Operation Phoenix was launched nearly a year ago (continued from yesterday):

Aug. 7: The temporary HEAT shelter on Howe St. closes. The city plans to open 166 units of subsidized housing in September at Dunsmuir House to serve as more permanent housing.

Aug. 19: The first residents of the new Woodward's condo building take possession of their units. The new development is touted as a key means to revitalize the community.

Sept. 10: The one-year anniversary of the new Downtown Community Court, created to try to rehabilitate chronic offenders and drug users. As of July 31, 2009, the court had seen 1,786 offenders, resolved 1,970 cases, sent 568 offenders to social, health and mental-health sessions, placed 209 in a shelter or housing and got 35 onto income assistance.

Sept. 14: The troubled former Backpackers Inn in the Downtown Eastside reopens as the 41-room Beacon Hotel after B.C. Housing spent \$3.4 million to purchase and renovate the building.

-- Elaine O'Connor, Staff Reporter

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Oct. 12: At the Union Gospel Mission on East Cordova Street, 250 volunteers serve 3,000 Thanksgiving dinners to the hungry and homeless.

Oct. 13: Official opening of The Lux. A nine-storey hotel at 65 E. Hastings St., it has a 400-square-foot bedbug sauna that heats up to 65C to destroy the parasites often found in beds and belongings. The province contributed \$12.9 million toward the \$22.4-million capital cost, while the federal government provided \$7.6 million. It has 92 self-contained units.

Oct. 22: A study released by the Vancouver Police Union finds more than 59 per cent of patrol officers in the Downtown Eastside are strongly opposed to Insite, the city's supervised injection site.

Oct. 31: The Umbrella, a homeless shelter at 625 Powell St., opens with room for 26 homeless women. B.C. Housing will provide \$1 million a year in operating costs.

Nov. 17: The controversial Assistance to Shelter Act

is passed in the B.C. legislature. The law gives police the power to forcibly take homeless people to a shelter against their will during extremely cold weather. Once there the homeless person may leave if he or she wishes.

Nov. 23: The B.C. component of a federal study called At Home gets under way under the lead of Dr. Julian Somers of Simon Fraser University. Under the five-city study, 500 mentally ill homeless people in Vancouver will be housed for at least two years.

Dec. 15: The City of Vancouver and the B.C. government announce a \$28.8-million, 11-storey building to be built on city land at 188 E. First Ave. It will provide 129 units of supportive housing for those who are homeless and face various challenges.

Dec. 19: Vancouver approves a \$50,000 grant to train and pay 70 Downtown Eastside binners \$10 an hour to collect bottles and cans from the downtown core during the 17-day Olympic Games.

Dec. 22: A temporary homeless shelter, one of four new shelters to open this winter, opens at 677 East Broadway with 40 beds.

Dec. 23: An undercover operation by Vancouver police called Project Larceny leads to 76 charges in the Downtown Eastside and an end to a brisk business in stolen goods in the 100-block of East Hastings Street.

Dec. 25: It takes 180 turkeys and 250 volunteers to serve Christmas dinner to 2,000 people at the Salvation Army's Harbour Light Addictions and Rehabilitation Centre.

Jan. 6: A temporary emergency shelter with 40 beds opens at 1435 Granville Street. The shelter will close April 30.

Jan. 11: The third temporary homeless shelter to open this winter opens at 747 Cardero Street in the West End. It has 40 beds and will close at the end of April.

Jan. 11: Vancouver's Streethome Foundation, headed by a board of prominent business and community leaders, releases report saying solving homelessness will cost \$500 million over the next 10 years.