

UGM Expands its Women and Families Recovery and Housing Centre



South Facing Courtyards

“This is an admirable project that will change people’s lives. Those involved with this project should be proud of it, both for its services and design.”

- UDP Panel 2018



Corner of Cordova St. and Princess Ave.

The Union Gospel Mission (UGM) is expanding the Women and Families Recovery and Housing Centre at 616 East Cordova St. in Vancouver’s DTES. UGM, a non-profit society that has been feeding hope and changing the lives of men, women and children since 1940 by providing, meals, shelter and affordable housing, chaplaincy services, outreach and education, addiction recovery and prevention.

The 7-storey mixed-use project consists of four major components: (1) 27 recovery and stabilization sleeping units for women and babies of The Sanctuary program; (2) 36 subsidized rental housing – studio,



Drop-in centre and Courtyard



Chapel



Rooftop Childcare

“We are building a mix of housing here that will help people who have been struggling to find homes they can afford in their community,”

“People in the Downtown Eastside shouldn’t have to leave their community because of a lack of appropriate housing.”

*- Salina Robinson,
Minister of Housing*

one, two, and three bedroom units; (3) two childcares (infant and toddler) with exterior play areas with outdoor play areas, a drop-in centre; and (4) UGM’s office and support services.

The form of the building emerged from a desire to develop a strong urban street definition on Cordova and Princess. This “L” shape form results in a large south facing communal courtyard along the lane. Internally, the mandate was to design a straightforward efficient building with clear circulation.

Outdoor amenity areas with southern exposure has been provided on the ground level for the drop-in centre and second floor for staff and residents.

The proposed palette of materials for the building exterior include brick masonry, coloured panel, painted concrete and glazing in aluminum frames. Although undeniably modern in expression, the building form and materials allude to and reflect elements of the historical architecture of the Downtown Eastside.

Landscape treatment of the streets includes the introduction of street trees, decorative paving, benches, bicycle racks, and a 3m wide interpretive children’s walk along Princess Avenue.

“We’re really excited about it because we’re hopefully going to change the trajectory of families for good and break the pattern, the trap of poverty, and give families—and specifically women-led families—a place to thrive and get the supports they need,” - Jeremy Hunka, Union Gospel Mission spokesman.