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Canada's First Container Housing Development Built in Vancouver

By Christine Walsh on Sep. 9, 2013 | Topics: [Container Design](#), [CONTAINER HOMES](#), [Design](#) | [Comments \(0\)](#)



Early last month, Canada got its first recycled shipping container housing development. It is located in the Downtown Eastside area of Vancouver, at 502 Alexander St. The housing project was developed by Atira Women's Resource Society, which wanted to create affordable and quality non-market housing units to be rented out to older women.

The housing development is comprised of 12 studio units, each with a net living area of 280 – 290 square feet. All of the units are entirely self-contained, complete with bathrooms, kitchens and an in-suite laundry. With its colorful navy blue and burnt orange exterior walls, the housing blends in perfectly with the other building in the neighborhood.





The base structure of this three-story housing development was constructed from 12 recycled shipping containers. The walls of the units are spray-foam insulated and finished with drywall. The development meets all the national building codes, while it even exceeds the code requirements for insulation and sound transference.

The construction took approximately 8 months, with the first shipping container being transported to the building site on November 30th, 2012 and the project being finished in July 2013. The hard construction costs were \$82,500 per unit.





Out of the 12 recycled container units, two were donated by private citizens, and two by B.C. Hydro. The remaining eight containers were purchased through a Port Metro Vancouver broker. The containers contain steel and are worth about \$5,000 each, which would typically be too expensive for such an affordable housing development, according to the project development manager James Weldon.

Next door to the Alexander Street container housing, Atira also conducted a heritage restoration of a 16-unit Imouto Housing for Young Women. The two projects together cost \$3.3 million. Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp. contributed \$2.6 million of this cost, while the City of Vancouver contributed \$92,000.

Half of the units in the Alexander Street development will be available for a fixed rent of \$375 and rented to women with a minimal monthly income. The rent for the remaining six units will be calculated based on the resident's income with a maximum rent of \$850 per month. The residents of these units can also only earn a maximum of \$34,000 a year.



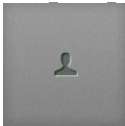


Atira is already reviewing applications from potential residents, while they aim to make the cheaper, \$375-a-month units available primarily to women over 50 years old.

The developers of the Alexander Street housing project were inspired by similar housing developments in Europe, and the society is already planning a second, more upscale container housing development at Hastings Street and Hawks Avenue in Vancouver. This one will be a seven-story structure comprised of 42 units, but the society is still waiting on city council approval to begin construction.

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