



Media Release – for Immediate Release

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Neighbourhood House Brings New Life to Heritage Fire Hall in Marpole

The Association of Neighbourhood Houses of BC (ANHBC) will open a new neighbourhood house at a city-owned heritage building on West 70th and Hudson known as Marpole Place. South Vancouver Neighbourhood House (SVNH) will take the lead in connecting with the local community and making sure that the newly renovated 17,000 square foot facility serves the neighbourhood needs. SVNH is ANHBC’s largest neighbourhood house and has operated at 49th and Victoria for 40 years. The decision to approve ANHBC’s proposal was made by Vancouver City Council on January 25, 2017.

“We’ve been at this for a long time in South Vancouver,” says Lorna Gibbs, chair of SVNH’s community board. “People who came through our doors as kids have come back with their own children. We’re proud of the positive impact we’ve had on generations of our neighbours and we’re glad to see the City has confidence in us to lead the Marpole project.”

Marpole Place has housed a number of community programs in past years. The building was closed in 2013 after a major flood. The City of Vancouver is refurbishing the site and in 2016 it invited proposals to operate the facility. Zahra Esmail, executive director at SVNH, led the

concept development for programming at Marpole. “Marpole needs places for neighbours to connect and needs space for programs,” says Esmail. “We talked to many different organizations and people and we’ve developed some great partnerships along the way. Marpole is very diverse. People care a lot about their community. We are so pleased to be able to make a contribution here.”

“This is a milestone for us at ANHBC,” says board president, Sue Melnychuk. “It’s the first new neighbourhood house we’ve opened in Vancouver in over a decade.” The facility will be ready for occupancy in late 2018.

Neighbourhood houses are nonprofit, community social service organizations that focus on the neighbourhoods they serve. They are welcoming and inclusive by design and offer a range of services like childcare, English classes, and seniors programs, tailored to local needs.

Neighbourhood houses go beyond service delivery. The mission of ANHBC is to build healthy neighbourhoods by connecting people and strengthening their capacity for change. Recent research done in British Columbia on neighbourhood houses demonstrated that 76% of participants reported that their ability to work with people from different backgrounds increased and a majority agreed they gained skills like organizing events and speaking in front of groups. ANHBC operates six other neighbourhood houses in Vancouver, one in South Surrey and an outdoor camp in Port Moody.

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