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New units offer concierge and games to people on the streets

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BRAND new furnished apartments with a games room, library, conference rooms and a concierge - it is the kind of lifestyle rarely obtained for less than seven figures.

But about 50 homeless Sydneysiders would call this home within two years under plans lodged by the State Government.

Housing NSW last week put in a development application with City of Sydney Council for the first Common Ground housing project in NSW, in which the most vulnerable people are plucked from the street and given their own flats to help them to get back on their feet.

The six-storey, 104-unit development in Camperdown will come complete with bike racks and scooter parking, activity rooms and a "social enterprise space", according to blueprints given to the *Herald*.

The Government has also promised a range of support services, including health, counselling, vocational training, living skills and financial management, which would be provided by Mission Australia Housing Ltd. "It's well located, being in a mixed community with good access to local services, especially public transport," said Rosanne Haggerty, who created the Common Ground model in New York, during a visit to the site on Thursday.

But the proposal drew a much chillier response from some local residents, suggesting it could face a rocky road through the development assessment process.

Four heritage-listed terraces owned by Housing NSW will be demolished under the plan, forcing their public housing tenants to leave their homes of many years.

The building will also mean the end for a small park, popular with the public housing tenants in the public housing towers next door.

The leader of the residents' group, Paula Murray, said: "This is exactly what we feared would happen: the cottages destroyed, the tenants evicted and the park developed."

There are also questions about how much the project will cost. Housing NSW has failed to provide even a rough figure or indicate how funding will be divided between the state and federal governments.

This story was found at: <http://www.smh.com.au/national/new-units-offer-concierge-and-games-to-people-on-the-streets-20091122-isw5.html>