



RR-2

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Report Date: April 27, 2009
Contact: Dan Garrison
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RTS No.: 08073
VanRIMS No.: 08-2000-20
Meeting Date: May 5, 2009

TO: Vancouver City Council

FROM: Managing Director of Social Development in consultation with the Director of Real Estate Services

SUBJECT: Report Back on the Homeless Emergency Action Team

RECOMMENDATION

- A. That Council direct staff to work with the Provincial Government, private sector and non-profit partners to extend the shelters opened through the HEAT initiative to April 30, 2010.
- B. That Council direct staff to work with the Provincial Government, the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority, the Streethome Foundation and other partners to develop a blueprint to implement the Homeless Action Plan by 2015, as discussed in this report.
- C. That Council direct staff to report back with a Civic Engagement Strategy aimed at involving Vancouver residents in solutions to homelessness at the neighbourhood level, as discussed in this report.

GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The General Manager of Community Services RECOMMENDS approval of the foregoing.

COUNCIL POLICY

Council policy is to maintain and expand housing opportunities for low and modest-income households with priority for families with children; seniors on fixed incomes or in need of support; SRO residents; the mentally ill, physically disabled, and others at-risk of homelessness.

On December 16, 2008 Council directed the City Manager, in consultation with the office of the Mayor and the Homeless Emergency Action Team, to allocate the necessary staff resources and funding up to \$750,000 from Contingency Reserve in order to open safe and

secure buildings to shelter people immediately and to work with all available partners and use all available mechanisms to achieve this goal.

PURPOSE

This report summarizes the outcomes of the Mayor's Homeless Emergency Action Team (HEAT) initiative, which operated over a three month period from December 2008 to March 2009, and recommends next steps for the City and its partners to ensure that the momentum towards solving homelessness developed during the HEAT initiative is sustained.

BACKGROUND

On December 9, 2008, the Mayor officially announced the creation of HEAT, chaired by Mayor Robertson and composed of 14 members including City councillors, City staff, housing stakeholders, and private sector representatives (membership list is attached as Appendix A). The HEAT terms of reference, over a 90 day mandate, was to identify immediate steps that the City and its partners could take to get street homeless off the street and into safe and secure shelter over the winter.

On December 9, First United Church agreed to provide overnight shelter for a three-month period. At a HEAT meeting on December 14, City staff provided an update on City-owned buildings that could be converted for use as shelters. On December 16th, Council approved allocating \$750,000 to fund the City's contribution to HEAT. The City Manager, in consultation with the Mayor's Office and HEAT, was authorized to spend the funds to open safe and secure shelters immediately and to work with all available partners and use all available mechanisms to achieve this goal. Immediately after receiving Council approval, the City, the Province, and the Streethome Foundation entered into a partnership to provide a combined \$1.5 million in funding (\$500,000 each) for the operation of five temporary shelters over the winter. The shelters were operated by experienced community-based non-profit service providers.

HEAT met for the last time on March 8, 2009. By then, the Province had agreed to make operating funds available to extend the HEAT shelters to the end of June 2009, with the City to make the spaces available and pay all building-related costs (e.g. utilities, maintenance, etc). HEAT also identified key next steps for the City and its partners, which form the basis of the recommendations to Council in this report.

DISCUSSION

This report documents the inputs and resources, the actions and the outcomes of the HEAT initiative over the three month period from December 9, 2008 to March 8, 2009.

1. Inputs, Funding and In-Kind Resources

Three organizations provided the core funding for the HEAT initiative: the City of Vancouver, BC Housing and the Streethome Foundation. Each partner provided \$500,000, making up the total budget of \$1.5 million. This funding was used to secure and renovate buildings, and to operate five shelters over a three month period (staffing, food, utilities, etc). The partners also directed a portion of this funding to Lookout Emergency Aid Society to provide overnight staffing at First United Church.

The City agreed that its funding component would first be used to renovate and maintain the shelter buildings. The total capital cost of renovations was approximately \$270,000 for three buildings (Granville, Howe and Central). Those renovations that resulted in permanent improvements to the buildings were funded out of the Property Endowment Fund (approximately \$45,000). The City contributed \$225,000 from the HEAT funding to capital improvements and provided the remaining \$275,000 to BC Housing to assist with the costs of shelter operations.

In addition to this core funding, community partners contributed financial and in-kind resources. The majority of these contributions went directly to First United Church. St. Andrew's Wesley Church provided \$10,000 in direct funding. Staffing at First United was provided primarily by volunteers, who were supported by Lookout staff. While this in-kind contribution of time and energy is difficult to quantify, it would have been impossible to keep First United Church open without these volunteer resources.

Finally, the HEAT initiative generated an outpouring of assistance from Vancouver residents. During the first few weeks of HEAT, the City received hundreds of calls and emails from concerned citizens offering to help. Several of the HEAT shelter providers note that they received a steady stream of donations over the winter months, from blankets and food to cash contributions.

2. Activities

a) Establish the Homeless Emergency Action Team

On December 9, 2008, the Mayor officially announced the creation of HEAT, chaired by Mayor Robertson and composed of 14 members including city councillors, city staff, housing stakeholders, and private sector representatives listed in Appendix A. HEAT met almost every Sunday between December 9, 2008 and March 8, 2009. The members of the team formed the steering committee for the HEAT initiative, coordinating the work of staff at the City, BC Housing and non-profit service providers.

b) Immediately open First United Church overnight

The top priority of HEAT upon its inception was to identify facilities that could be opened as soon as possible as temporary shelters. On December 9th, the Mayor announced that an agreement had been reached with First United Church, which would allow First United to shelter people 24 hours a day. The agreement included initial funding commitments from the following:

- The City of Vancouver - \$10,000
- The Provincial Government - \$10,000
- Streethome Foundation - \$10,000
- St Andrew's Wesley Church - \$10,000

First United Church has operated as a no-barrier shelter, and was expected to shelter 150 people per night. Since opening on December 15th, high demand meant that the Church sheltered more than 200 people per night.

c) Secure and renovate buildings for additional shelter

City staff identified several City-owned buildings which could be relatively quickly renovated and used to provide emergency shelter.

- The Stanley/New Fountain Hotel (51B East Cordova Street) was already operated as a residential hotel by PHS Society. Fifteen rooms that had been recently vacated were reopened and used to provide 30 additional shelter spaces.
- 1435 Granville Street was a vacant warehouse that required somewhat more extensive renovations to convert the building to shelter use, providing 36 additional shelter spaces.
- 201 Central Avenue was also identified by staff due to the large size and good location of the building near the corner of Main St. and Terminal Avenue. This building required extensive renovations, and could not be opened until January 2009.
- 1442 Howe Street is located across the back lane from the 1435 Granville Street shelter. This building was initially passed over in favour of 1435 Granville, but high demand for shelter services in the West End and Downtown South led HEAT to open this additional building in early February.

City staff and contractors moved quickly to renovate and convert these buildings into warm, inviting and functional shelter spaces. In the case of 201 Central, a significant amount of work was undertaken to remove old partitions, update electrical systems, and install new bathrooms. Under an expedited work program, these renovations were completed in less than two weeks.

d) Partner with community organizations to operate the shelters

HEAT members contacted shelter and housing providers to see who had the capacity to operate HEAT's shelters on short notice. RainCity Housing, PHS Community Services Society, and the Aboriginal Friendship Centre Society agreed to provide staff, operational support, design advice, and helped to develop the operating budgets for the shelters.

e) City Process and Permitting

In order to allow the shelters to open as quickly as possible, City staff adjusted normal City approval processes. Emergency shelters usually require temporary Development Permits to operate. These permits are usually approved by the Director of Planning after a process that includes public notification. In this case, the Director of Planning waived the requirement for temporary Development Permits due to the urgent necessity to open the HEAT shelters for the winter and the clear direction from Council. While no neighbourhood notification process took place prior to the shelters opening, shelter operators notified neighbours once the shelters were open and provided contact numbers people could call in case issues or concerns arose.

In addition to waiving the need for Development Permits, the City also relaxed some requirements of the Vancouver Building Bylaw. The focus of the permitting process was to ensure that a minimum level of health and safety standards was met. For example, the buildings were not required to have sprinklers, which could not be supported with existing plumbing. In order to ensure fire safety, the City required the shelters to be staffed 24/7 with reasonable staff ratios and that all staff be trained in evacuation procedures in the event of fire.

Staff will report back to Council to amend the City's by-laws so that approvals of temporary shelters are explicitly addressed in the regulations.

f) **Open and operate shelters over winter months**

In total, five HEAT shelters were opened and operated by experienced non-profit shelter providers over the winter months:

- First United Church: the Church agreed to remain open overnight on December 9, 2008. Originally operated by church staff and volunteers, the high volume of people staying overnight led to a partnership with Lookout Emergency Aid Society, which BC Housing funded to provide additional staff support.
- 1435 Granville Street was operated by RainCity Housing. It opened on December 20, 2008, with a capacity for sheltering 36 people.
- The Stanley New Fountain Hotel was operated by PHS. It opened on December 18, 2008, with a capacity for sheltering 30 people.
- 201 Central Avenue was operated by the Aboriginal Friendship Society. It opened on January 12, 2009, with a capacity for sheltering 100 people.
- 1442 Howe Street was also operated by RainCity Housing as it is located across the lane from 1435 Granville. It opened on February 5, 2009 with capacity for 36 people.

g) **Ensure HEAT shelters are as accessible and low barrier as possible**

- The HEAT shelters were designed to reduce barriers to street homeless people coming inside. The following factors, related to building design and shelter operations, increased the HEAT shelters accessibility:
 - **Shopping Cart Storage** - All HEAT shelters were designed to accommodate and secure shopping carts. Shopping carts were stored in locked areas outside of the shelters in most cases. At the 201 Central shelter, the City built a cart storage facility inside the building.
 - **Pets** - All HEAT shelters welcomed pets. At 201 Central, a kennel area was built inside the shelter. At other location, pets slept with their owners. The HEAT initiative partnered with the SPCA to provide food, kennels and other needs related to pets. There were no reported incidents involving pets in the HEAT shelters.
 - **Hours** - HEAT shelters were open 16 hours per day, usually from about 6 PM to 10 AM. The ability to come inside in the early evening and stay until late morning has been a significant incentive to people coming into HEAT shelters. Previous seasonal shelters opened during winter months often did not open until 11 PM and closed at 7 AM the following morning.
 - **Food** - HEAT shelters were funded to provide two nutritious meals per day, including dinner and breakfast. High quality and nutritious food had two impacts on the operations of the shelters. First, good food provided an important incentive for people to come inside. Second, healthy food helped to stabilize the behaviours of people staying in the shelters. After a good evening meal, people who had previously been considered "hard to house" became easier for shelter staff to work with.
 - **Operating Approach** - The operators of the HEAT shelters (RainCity, PHS and the Aboriginal Friendship Centre) use a "low-barrier" approach to manage and build relationships with clients so that most homeless people can be accommodated while the shelters remain safe, respectful and welcoming. Low barrier does not mean there are no rules, but rather that rules are negotiated and re-negotiated between staff and clients on an ongoing basis. The goal is to find workable

solutions so that no one has to be turned away, while ensuring everyone's safety and comfort is maintained.

3. Outputs and Outcomes

The outputs and outcomes of the HEAT are presented in response to the main objective of the initiative: to get people who are homeless off the streets and into safe and secure shelter over the winter months. The HEAT initiative had many additional benefits that will also be addressed. When possible, this report relies on quantitative indicators of success. However, many of the key successes of this initiative are qualitative and are presented as narrative.

New Shelter Capacity Created

- Over the course of the 3-month initiative, HEAT shelters provided over 31,000 bed nights, accommodating an average of 433 people per night.
- The HEAT initiative resulted in an immediate 60% increase in shelter capacity in the City of Vancouver.

Table 1: Shelter capacity at five HEAT shelters

	Operator	Bed Nights	Nights Open	Avg Served/Night
First United Church	First United/ Lookout	19,686	85	232
51B Cordova	PHS	3,163	78	41
1435 Granville	RainCity	2,762	78	35
1442 Howe	RainCity	938	31	30
201 Central	VAFC	4,574	48	95
TOTAL		31,123		433

People Served in HEAT Shelters

- Shelter operators were asked to collect limited data about the people staying in HEAT shelters so that they could focus on providing service. At First United Church, no data was collected beyond absolute numbers. As a result, the information presented in Table 2 on people using HEAT shelters excludes those staying at First United.
- Over the course of the three-month HEAT initiative, 31,123 bed nights of shelter were provided. Names of shelter users were not collected, so it is not known how many discreet individuals were sheltered, but shelter operators report that many of their clients stayed in a particular shelter throughout the three-month period. For example, PHS estimates that while they provided shelter at 51B Cordova Street to 40 people per night, they sheltered perhaps 60 discreet individuals from December 2008 to March 2009.
- The majority of the people staying in HEAT shelters were adult men, noting that "adult" refers to people 19 years of age and older. In the four shelters for which we have data, 84% of people were male and 16% were female. In three of the shelters, 51B Cordova and the Granville and Howe shelters, women made up 20% of shelter clients. The 201 Central Shelter served mostly men, with only 12% of clients being female.
- While virtually all people using HEAT shelters were technically adults (over 19 years), the Granville and Howe Shelters served many street youth (defined here as 19 to 24 years). RainCity Housing, which operated both shelters, estimates that at least 60% of clients at the two shelters are youth. RainCity staff and outreach workers (City and

Provincial) note that the youth staying in these shelters are some of the most street involved and at-risk youth in the city. Even at their young age, some of these youth are considered to be chronically homeless and resistant to receiving services and coming inside. Outreach workers who have been in contact with this group for several years report that after a few months in HEAT shelters, many of these youth look much healthier and are almost unrecognizable.

- There were 871 turn-aways recorded during the three-month period, for an average of about 10 turn-aways per night. At the peak of the initiative, when all five shelters were open, turn-aways reached nearly 40 per night.
- The vast majority of turn-aways were due to shelters being full, rather than behavioural or other issues. Only two turn-aways were recorded for behavioural issues throughout the three month period, an indication of the low barrier approach and quality of the service provided in the shelters.
- Operators at all HEAT shelters avoided turn-aways to the extent possible and tried to re-locate anyone who could not be housed in their shelter. The data demonstrated that most of the turn-aways occurred at the Granville and Howe shelters, pointing to the lack of other low barrier shelter options in the West End and Downtown South.

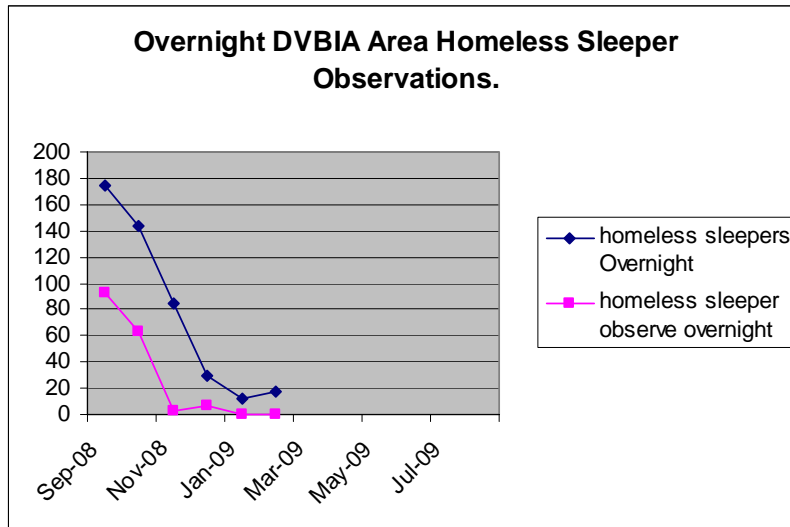
Table 2: Stays at HEAT shelters

Shelter	Operator	Nights Open	Male	Female	Total	T'aways Full	T'aways Other
First United Church	First United/Lookout	85	n/a	n/a	19,686	0	
51B Cordova	PHS	78	2,508	655	3,163	0	
1435 Granville	RainCity	78	2,272	490	2,762	471	2
201 Central	VAFC	48	4,045	529	4,574	165	
1442 Howe	RainCity	31	735	203	938	233	
TOTAL (all shelters)					31,123		
<i>TOTAL (excluding First United)</i>			<i>9,560</i>	<i>1,877</i>	<i>11,437</i>	<i>869</i>	<i>2</i>

Reductions in Street Homelessness and Disorder

- Homeless counts were not conducted during the HEAT initiative, but several indicators point to a dramatic decrease in street homelessness as a result of the additional shelter space.
- The March 2008 Homeless Count found that a minimum of 811 people were street homeless in Vancouver on any given night. With an average occupancy of 433 people per night, it is reasonable to estimate that the HEAT shelters resulted in a 50% decrease in street homelessness over the winter months.
- The Downtown Vancouver Business Improvement Association records overnight interactions with and observations of people who are homeless in the downtown core. DVBIA staff record both interactions with homeless sleepers and observations people sleeping outside (with no interaction), as shown in Figure 1 below. In September 2008, the DVBIA recorded 267 people sleeping on the streets overnight in the DVBIA area. In December 2008, the month the HEAT shelters opened, that number decreased to about 36 people. In the entire month of January, DVBIA staff reported only 12 overnight sleepers in the downtown area. While some decrease in those sleeping rough usually occurs as winter sets in, the DVBIA directly attributes the extent of this decrease to the HEAT shelters.

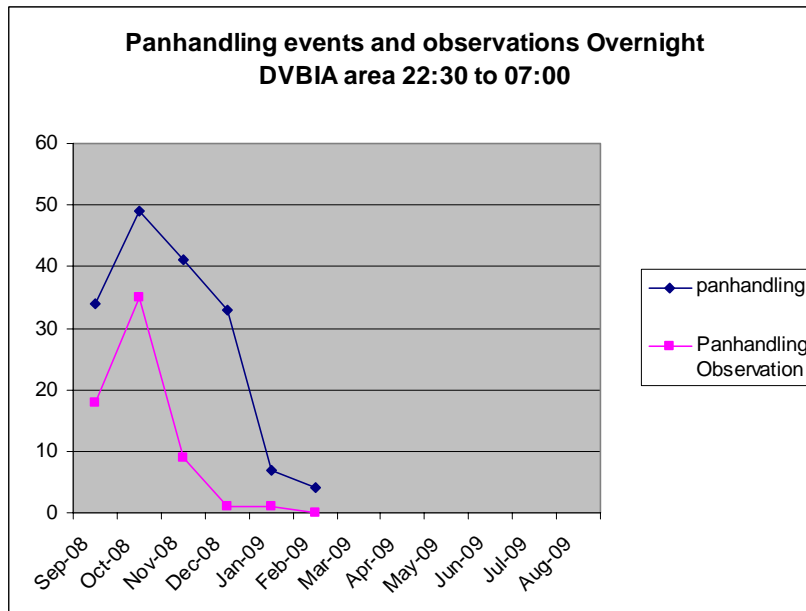
Figure 1: Overnight sleepers in DVBIA Area, September 2008 to February 2009



Source: Downtown Vancouver Business Improvement Association

- The DVBIA also tracks the number of interactions with and observations of panhandlers in the downtown area during the night (10:30 PM to 7:00 AM). “Observations” indicates passive panhandling, whereas a record of interaction with a panhandler is an indicator of “aggressive panhandling.” From December 2008 to January 2009, the number of DVBIA interactions with panhandlers fell from 33 to 7, an 80% reduction.

Figure 2: Overnight panhandling in DVBIA Area, September 2008 to February 2009



Source: Downtown Vancouver Business Improvement Association

HEAT's Impact on the Extreme Weather Response Program

- Another indicator of the impact of the HEAT shelters on street homelessness is the use of Extreme Weather Response (EWR) shelters over the winter months. EWR shelters are a crisis response that launches during periods of extreme winter weather to augment the existing shelter system. The shelters are volunteer driven and do not all open on the same nights to prevent volunteer burnout. Vancouver has 10 locations that open as EWR shelters. EWR shelters have been operated informally for many years, but the program has been formalized since BC Housing assumed management in 2005. Since that date, the EWR has been launched an average of 32 nights per winter.
- The opening of the HEAT shelters had an immediate and significant impact on use of EWR shelters, particularly in the neighbourhoods where HEAT shelters are located. The three EWR shelters in the DTES averaged a total of 11 people per night after the two DTES HEAT shelters opened (First United Church and the Stanley/New Fountain Shelter). By comparison, during the 2006/2007 winter the three EWR shelters in the DTES averaged 123 people per night.
- The Salvation Army - Harbour Light EWR shelter provides the most striking example of the impact of the HEAT shelters, averaging 26 people per night before the HEAT shelters opened and just 5 people per night afterwards.
- The reduced use of EWR shelters can be considered a positive indicator for the HEAT shelters. It indicates that the HEAT shelters met a significant portion of demand for emergency shelter. It also indicates that people seeking shelter chose HEAT shelters over EWR options. This preference is likely due to the low barrier approach, the availability of food and the earlier opening and longer operating hours.
- The reduced use of EWR shelters in proximity to HEAT shelters also raises two issues regarding the EWR program:
 - First, we note that EWR shelters were still heavily used in areas where HEAT shelters did not open, or where the HEAT shelters still could not accommodate the high demand. In Kitsilano, for example, St. Mark's Church launched its Extreme Weather Response 32 times over the course of the winter, sheltering an average of 20 people per night. Despite the opening of two HEAT shelters in the West End/Downtown South, the Gathering Place still launched its EWR 16 times, sheltering an average of 27 people per night. The fact that the HEAT shelters took some of the pressure off the EWR does not diminish the need for the EWR. The EWR is a critical program that will be needed to address homelessness during extreme weather events for the foreseeable future.
 - Second, the guidelines and funding for the EWR program should be reviewed in light of the lessons learned through the HEAT initiative. In particular, hours of opening and closing, quality of food provided and barriers to access (e.g. cart storage, accommodations for pets) should be considered for EWR sites in the future. It is acknowledged that these considerations will have implications for EWR funding and implementation.

Improved access to housing and services

- The HEAT shelters are short-term response intended to bring people who are homeless inside. They were not envisioned as a long-term solution to homelessness. However, HEAT shelters have had several positive impacts on the many street entrenched people who came inside through this initiative.
 - Shelter operators report that access to healthy food and regular sleep has had noticeable and, in many cases, profound impacts on the health of homeless individuals staying in their shelters.

- To facilitate the movement of people from HEAT shelters into longer-term supportive housing, BC Housing tenant support workers visited the shelters regularly. BC Housing staff visited at least one HEAT shelter everyday over the three months of the initiative, and continue to do so. As of April 20, 2009, BC Housing reports that 55 people have been moved into longer-term housing from HEAT shelters.
- The HEAT shelters have provided people with serious and persistent challenges the opportunity to come inside and improve both their mental and physical health. The key factor to sustain these positive impacts is the availability of longer-term supportive housing options.

Lessons Learned

The partners involved in the HEAT shelters identified several lessons learned as a result of the experience. Four key lessons are presented here:

1. With political will, a willingness among all partners to work together, and adequate resources, a great deal of progress can be made to shelter people in a relatively short period of time.
2. Providing low-barrier shelter, including accommodating shopping carts and pets, is not as difficult as was thought. Low barrier shelter is about shelter design (e.g. cart storage facilities), but more importantly it is about an operating model. Rather than adhering to hard and fast rules, arrangements between staff and clients are negotiated and renegotiated in an ongoing way to ensure people remain in the shelter.
3. Wherever possible, all shelter initiatives should be funded to operate adequate hours. The HEAT shelters opening from 6pm to 10am daily, a total of 16 hours per day, was a huge improvement over previous seasonal and extreme weather shelter models that operated only 8 or 9 hours per day.
4. High quality hot food is a critical component of the HEAT program and should be included in all shelter and supportive housing programs targeting homelessness. Good food contributes to the health and wellbeing of people who are homeless. It also makes operating a low-barrier shelter easier, because people with access to adequate nutrition tend to have fewer behavioural issues.

Next Steps

The HEAT initiative successfully achieved its objective of providing safe temporary shelter to people who are homeless over the winter months. HEAT had additional benefits including positive health outcomes, access to longer-term housing for some people staying in the shelters, and reduced street disorder in downtown Vancouver. Shelters are an important part of the housing continuum, however all partners recognize that long-term supportive housing is the solution to homelessness, and that much work is left to be done to achieve our goal of eliminating homelessness in the city by 2015.

At its wrap-up meeting of March 8, 2009, HEAT identified three key next steps for the City and its partners that form the basis of the recommendations to Vancouver City Council presented in this report:

A. *Extend the shelters opened through the HEAT initiative to April 30, 2010.*

On April 23, 2009, Council adopted a motion calling on the provincial government to provide funding for the City's Interim Housing Solutions Strategy (IHSS). The IHSS proposes a partnership between the City, the Province and the private sector to provide over 500 units of temporary supportive housing over the next five years. The motion also called on the provincial government to commit longer term funding to the HEAT shelters.

The HEAT shelters will likely be needed at least through the winter of 2009/2010, while interim and permanent housing options are under development. The need for these shelters beyond April 2010 will depend on the timing of permanent housing resources coming online.

Staff note that the HEAT shelters are at capacity and there will be a need for additional capacity during the Olympic period. This additional capacity should include the implementation of the IHSS. It could also include launching the Extreme Weather Response shelter program for the duration of the Games.

B. *Develop a blueprint to implement the Homeless Action Plan by 2015.*

The Homeless Action Plan (HAP), adopted by Vancouver City Council in June 2005, identifies 87 actions that the City and its partners can take to end homelessness by 2015. The Plan identifies three components of the solution to homelessness: affordable housing, adequate income and support services. It also identifies a priority action for each of these areas. Under housing, the plan calls for 3,800 units of supportive and transitional housing by 2015. Under income, it calls for improved access to provincial Income Assistance and the creation of employment opportunities for people who are homeless. Under support services, it calls for a significant expansion of mental health and addictions services. As indicated in the July 2008 report to Council (*Homeless Action Plan Implementation Update*), some progress has been made on each of these priorities and on many of the other 87 recommendations in the plan. Despite this progress, the city continues to face a serious issue with homelessness.

In addition to the continued challenge presented by homelessness, several factors suggest that a process to refresh the Homeless Action Plan is now warranted. Vancouver City Council recently renewed its commitment to end homelessness in the city by 2015. The Provincial Government also recently announced its new homelessness initiative, led by the Ministry of Housing and Social Development. The private sector is also becoming more involved in solutions to homelessness, primarily through the Streethome Foundation. The Foundation is currently developing its own 6-year strategy to end homelessness that should assist in the implementation of HAP.

HAP continues to provide the broad framework for the City's work on homelessness, and a tool to help guide the work of our partners. The blueprint will be developed through discussions with the community to identify current priorities, and layout the specific steps required to implement HAP. The process will include workshops with key stakeholders and a public forum to confirm these priorities. Staff will report back to

Council in the fall of 2009 to outline the process and resource requirements for developing the blueprint to implement HAP.

C. Develop a Civic Engagement Strategy aimed at involving Vancouver residents in solutions to homelessness at the neighbourhood level.

Vancouver residents are involved in addressing homelessness in a number of neighbourhoods in the city. In the DTES, the Carnegie Community Action Project advocates on behalf of low-income residents. In several neighbourhoods, most notably Collingwood and Kitsilano, community centres and neighbourhood houses provide services to people who are homeless in the form of shower and meal programs. For the past several years, the Grandview Woodlands Alcohol and Drug Committee has organized highly successful homeless connect events offering a range of services to people who are homeless and at-risk in their neighbourhood.

HEAT discussed how to involve more Vancouver residents and neighbourhoods in addressing homelessness. Homelessness Action Week (HAW), held every October, is an important opportunity to engage residents in solutions to homelessness. Staff will report back to Council with a draft strategy focused on expanding the engagement of residents and neighbourhoods in HAW 2009, including staffing and budget.

City staff will follow-up on these next steps pending Council approval of the recommendations in this report. In addition, staff recognize that normal City processes related to permitting for emergency shelters were amended to facilitate the rapid opening of the HEAT shelters. Staff will report back to Council to address how to regularize the process for temporary Development Permits and Vancouver Building Bylaw amendments.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Recommendation A could have financial implications depending on the City's ongoing role in funding the HEAT shelters. Council approved a contribution of \$750,000 to the HEAT initiative, and \$500,000 of this contribution was spent during the first phase of HEAT (December 2008 to March 2009). The Province has agreed to fund the entire operating cost of the shelters through the extension period to the end of June 2009. The City will continue to cover building-related costs (utilities, maintenance, etc.) from the remaining \$250,000 in the HEAT fund. Should the shelters be funded beyond June 30, 2009, staff will report back to Council on financial implications.

Recommendations B and C will have financial and personnel implications. These two items are substantial pieces of work and will require either additional staff resources, or reallocation of current work priorities. Staff will report back to Council on civic engagement initiatives related to Homelessness Action Week and on a process to develop a blueprint to implement HAP. These reports will outline the financial and personnel implications of these recommendations.

There is approximately \$95,000 remaining in the Homeless Action Plan implementation fund. This fund can be used to offset some of the financial implications raised by Recommendations B and C.

CONCLUSION

On December 9, 2008, Mayor Robertson announced the creation of the Homeless Emergency Action Team. HEAT's purpose was to identify immediate action steps that the City and its partners could take to get the homeless off the streets and into safe and secure shelter over the winter months. The terms of reference provided HEAT with a three month mandate from December 2008 to March 2009.

HEAT was very successful at achieving its purpose. Five shelters were opened over the three month term, with three shelters opening in December 2008, one in January 2009 and one in February 2009. HEAT sheltered an average of 433 people per night over the three month period, representing a 60% increase in shelter capacity in the city. Through a low-barrier approach that included accommodation for shopping carts and pets, the HEAT shelters provided refuge for some of the City's most street entrenched homeless citizens. Good food and regular sleep led to noticeable improvements in the health of people staying in HEAT shelters. The initiative also had a positive impact on the streets of downtown Vancouver, with visible reductions in street homelessness and night-time panhandling. On average, over 430 people per night were accommodated. The City and Province have agreed to extend the shelters until June 30, 2009, and it is expected that they will be extended through the end of April 2010.

While HEAT was successful at providing low-barrier shelter over the winter, the City recognizes that much work needs to be done with our partners to implement the Homeless Action Plan and realize our goal of eliminating street homelessness by 2015.

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Homeless Emergency Action Team Members

Mayor Gregor Robertson (Chair)

Janice Abbott - Executive Director, Atira Women's Resource Society

Jim Chu - Chief, Vancouver Police Department

Dr. Patricia Daly - Chief Medical Officer, Vancouver Coastal Health Authority\

David Eby - Executive Director, BC Civil Liberties Association

Jerry Evans - Associate Director of Real Estate Services, City of Vancouver

Michael Flanigan - Director of Real Estate Services, City of Vancouver

Judy Graves - Outreach Coordinator, City of Vancouver

Cameron Gray - Managing Director of Social Development, City of Vancouver

Kerry Jang - City Councillor (Council Liaison), City of Vancouver

Raymond Louie - City Councillor, City of Vancouver

John MacKay - Strand Development Corporation, Board Member of Streethome Foundation

Shayne Ramsay - CEO, BC Housing

Patrick Stewart - Chair, Aboriginal Homelessness Steering Committee

APPENDIX B

Location of HEAT Shelters

