



ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Report Date: May 30, 2019
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Meeting Date: June 12, 2019

TO: Standing Committee on Policy and Strategic Priorities
FROM: General Manager, Arts, Culture and Community Services
SUBJECT: 2019 Homelessness Count and Rapid Responses to Homelessness Through Partnerships

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council receive this report for information, including the 2018-2019 Annual Report on Homelessness Services Actions and Next Steps included in Appendix A.

REPORT SUMMARY

Vancouver's poorest citizens are disproportionately impacted by the continuing housing crisis. A low vacancy rate coupled with a lack of affordable housing for people with very low incomes are key drivers of homelessness. This issue is not unique to Vancouver as communities across the region, province, country and North America are struggling with this issue.

Despite these challenges, Vancouver continues to be a leader in making efforts to meet the needs of very low-income residents who are typically excluded by and under-served by existing market and mainstream service systems. This report provides a summary of initiatives taken to address homelessness over the last year (including responses to motions put forward by Council), and sets the vision for key actions and partnerships moving forward.

Finally, it should be noted that the accompanying presentation at Council will include the preliminary results of the 2019 Annual Homeless Count and the presentation will be available following the meeting at www.vancouver.ca/homelessness. The full and final report is due later this year and will also be posted to the City's website.

COUNCIL AUTHORITY/PREVIOUS DECISIONS

Homeless Action Plan (1995)

The Homelessness Action Plan identifies actions which the City, other levels of government, the community and business can take to address homelessness. The plan identifies what changes are needed so that the 1,000 or so street homeless have stable housing and the number of people at risk of homelessness is reduced. Three components are identified as essential to alleviating homelessness: income, housing, and support services. Actions are necessary in all three areas to successfully deal with the complexities underlying homelessness.

Supportive Housing Strategy (2007)

The Supportive Housing Strategy builds on Vancouver Coastal Health's (VCH) framework document and focuses on housing for people with mental illnesses or addictions, and includes low barrier housing for people who may not be actively engaged in treatment. Over the 10 year plan, it estimated a need for 2,200 supported housing units. Some of these units would be rent supplements in private market rental buildings and some in dedicated or mixed buildings. The Strategy recommends that the City work with Vancouver Coastal Health and BC Housing to increase the supply of supportive housing and give residents of Vancouver a clear understanding of where and how this could happen.

Housing & Homelessness Strategy (2012-2021)

The Housing and Homelessness Strategy describes the City's overall direction for housing, including what we need and how we will achieve it over the next ten years. It identifies the different kinds of housing necessary to meet the needs of our citizens, as well as ways to improve and better preserve the housing we currently have. The goals of the strategy are to end street homelessness and provide more affordable housing choices for all Vancouverites. This includes housing that is accessible, affordable and suitable for all income levels, seniors, families and residents challenged by disability. Modest market and rental housing is key to the economic development of the City

Healthy City Strategy (2014)

The Healthy City Strategy is a long-term, integrated plan for healthier people, healthier places, and a healthier planet. The Healthy City Strategy is comprised of 13 long-term goals for the well-being of the City and its people, including ambitious targets to reach by 2025.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action (2016)

In January 2016, Council approved in principle the City's response to the 27 Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action that fall within its jurisdiction, in the areas of healthy communities and wellness; Indigenous and human rights and recognition; and advancing awareness, knowledge and capacity.

City of Reconciliation (2016)

As a City of Reconciliation, the City commits to:

1. Form a sustained relationship of mutual respect and understanding with local First Nations and the Urban Indigenous community, including key agencies
2. Incorporate a First Nations and Urban Indigenous perspective into our work and decisions

3. Provide services that benefit members of the First Nations and Urban Indigenous community

Long-term goals aim to:

- strengthen local First Nations and Urban Indigenous relations;
- promote Indigenous peoples arts, culture, awareness, and understanding; and,
- incorporate First Nations and Urban Indigenous perspectives for effective City services.

Poverty Reduction Plan (2017)

In June 2017, a motion was passed by Council, directing staff to report back on the progress of a poverty reduction plan for Vancouver as per the goals of the Healthy City Strategy.

Housing Vancouver (2018-2027)

Housing Vancouver is the City's vision for ensuring that Vancouver can be a home for people of all incomes and backgrounds, by prioritizing affordable housing and making housing markets work for all people who live and work in the City. The key areas of focus include:

- Shift toward the Right Supply
- Action to address speculation and support equity
- Protect and support diversity
- Protect our existing affordable housing for the future
- Renew our commitment to partnerships for affordable housing
- Increase supports and protections for renters and people who are homeless
- Align City processes with housing targets

GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS

Homelessness remains a significant and persistent challenge in Vancouver. Nevertheless, the City continues to build and nurture our partnerships with senior governments and Indigenous, non-profit, private sector, and other community partners by providing land, grants, and developing innovative responses like temporary modular housing to try and address this challenge.

However, the nature of the on-going challenge of homelessness is that, in recent years, more and more people have been living outside, on the streets, and in encampments. The City works hard to try and keep all our residents safe and has been responding to growing concerns around the health risks, including risk of fire, in the City's largest encampment at Oppenheimer Park. The City and Fire Department have been balancing the need to remove fire risks from tents with respecting the privacy of those currently living in the park.

On the day of this year's homeless count, regularly scheduled Oppenheimer Park safety review operations interrupted the homeless count magnet event organized by our Indigenous partners at the park. By carrying out the weekly park safety review, participants were disrupted from enjoying food and entertainment being provided at the event. We recognize that the regular weekly safety review should have been postponed from the day of the Homeless Count; there was an internal miscommunication that

resulted in this very unfortunate conflict of activities. We value our relationship with our Indigenous Homeless Count partners and acknowledge their legitimate and understandable frustration with the impacts this lack of coordination had on their important event. Staff have apologized to our partners and are committed to acknowledging our mistakes when we make them and to re-building our relationships in order to move forward to a safer and more inclusive future for Vancouver.

REPORT

Background/Context

An increasing number of Vancouver citizens are finding themselves in a housing crisis as their incomes are not keeping pace with rising housing prices and they are forced to compete in an overheated housing market with near zero vacancy rates.

Low-income households spending 30% or more of their income on housing are considered to be in core housing need. Data from Statistics Canada's 2016 Census shows that there are almost 42,800 renter households with household incomes of \$50,000 or less in Vancouver spending 30% or more of their income on rent. New research sponsored by Zillow¹ demonstrates that in communities where people spend more than 32% of their income on rent, homelessness is more likely to increase at a rapid rate. Their research shows that communities vulnerable to rising rents, unaffordability, and poverty comprise 15 percent of the U.S. population – and 47 percent of people experiencing homelessness.

In Vancouver, income growth has not kept pace with rents, leading to an affordability crisis whose impact is felt even more profoundly for those with very low-incomes. Structural causes also include factors such as stigma and discrimination, the lingering impacts of colonialism on Indigenous peoples. As a result, homelessness has grown over the last two decades in the city and region, with seniors, Indigenous households, lone-parent households, and youth at a disproportionate risk. The experience of homelessness has devastating impacts not only for the individual, but also negatively impacts our communities.

In addition to these structural causes of homelessness, other factors also need to be taken into consideration²:

- *systems failures* which occur when the child welfare, criminal justice, health or other systems fail and require an individual to rely on the homelessness services sector for support when homelessness could have been prevented through proper discharge planning and support.
- *Individual and relational factors* which include the personal circumstances of an individual experiencing homelessness such as traumatic events (e.g. house fire or job loss), personal crisis (e.g. family break-up or domestic violence), mental

¹ Chris Glynn - Alexander Casey, Dec. 11, 2018. "Homelessness Rises Faster Where Rent Exceeds a Third of Income" <https://www.zillow.com/research/homelessness-rent-affordability-22247/>

² Stephen Gaetz, Jesse Donaldson, Tim Richter, & Tanya Gulliver (2013) The State of Homelessness in Canada 2013. Toronto: Canadian Homelessness Research Network Press.

health and addictions challenges (including brain injury and fetal alcohol syndrome).

It is also important to recognize that unlike the common colonialist definition of homelessness, Indigenous homelessness³ is not defined as lacking a structure of habitation; rather, it is more fully described and understood through a composite lens of Indigenous worldviews. These include: individuals, families and communities isolated from their relationships to land, water, place, family, kin, each other, animals, cultures, languages and identities. Importantly, Indigenous people experiencing these kinds of homelessness cannot culturally, spiritually, emotionally or physically reconnect with their Indigeneity or lost relationships

The causes of homelessness are complex and often intertwined and not as a result of a single cause. Similarly, the solutions also need to be responsive to local context and take a holistic approach to these intersecting factors. Government and community interventions are needed in:

- *prevention* and ensuring adequate policies, planning, and resources are in place to ensure individual and families do not become homeless;
- *intervention* to quickly respond to those who fall into homelessness; and
- *long-term solutions* to ensure individuals remain stably housed.

For Indigenous residents, access to culture plays a key role across each of these interventions. The City, in partnership with senior government, community and non-profit housing, and homelessness service providers continues to demonstrate leadership in addressing the causes and implementing the solutions to homelessness.

Strategic Analysis

Homelessness in the City, Region and Province

Homeless Counts

Point-in-Time (PiT) counts have been conducted every three years in the region since 2005 and Vancouver has conducted annual counts in the intervening years since 2010. The first ever provincial count was conducted in 2018.

PiT counts provide a 24-hour snapshot of people who are experiencing homelessness, including important baseline information on the estimated number, key demographic characteristics, and service provision needs, as well as trends in the data over time. The regional counts include a more comprehensive survey of individuals experiencing homelessness, while the Vancouver count is considered an interim update and includes fewer survey questions. While PiT counts are understood to be an undercount (estimated as much as 20%⁴) and represent only those individuals identified during the 24-hour period, it is an accepted methodological tool for collecting data on homelessness at a single Point-in-Time, to provide an overview about on-going trends.

³ Thistle, J. (2017.) Indigenous Definition of Homelessness in Canada. Toronto: Canadian Observatory on Homelessness Press.

⁴ Chris Glynn†, Thomas H. Byrne, and Dennis P. Culhane “Quantifying uncertainty in HUD estimates of homelessness” estimated that PiT counts undercount by roughly 20% and propose a refined methodology that can be used to provide for developing and reporting uncertainty estimates for future PIT counts.

While homelessness has traditionally been considered an issue isolated to urban centres, it is increasing in suburban and rural communities. The *2018 Report on Homeless Counts in B.C.*⁵ identified a total of 7,655 individuals as experiencing homelessness (63% were sheltered and 37% were unsheltered) in 24 communities across the province. The most recent Metro count done in 2017 identified a total of 3,605 individuals experiencing homelessness in the region – up 30 per cent from the previous count in 2014 – making 2017 the 12th consecutive year that homelessness increased.

The City of Vancouver's 2018 Point-in-Time homeless count found 2,181 people homeless in Vancouver including 1,522 people sheltered and 659 on the street – this was the highest number since the first regional homeless count in 2005. Staff will provide an accompanying presentation on the preliminary findings of the City of Vancouver's 2019 Vancouver Homelessness Count at the June 12th meeting.

In addition to growth in homelessness, there are also consistent trends in the data that highlight the need to create and target specific interventions. The continued overrepresentation of Indigenous people experiencing homelessness highlights the impacts of colonialism and intergenerational trauma experienced by many Indigenous peoples. As a City of Reconciliation and in *Housing Vancouver*, we have set a target to reduce Indigenous homelessness by 50% by 2021. Individuals experiencing homelessness also have more serious health issues, as well as a lower life expectancy. Traumatic personal events and serious health issues contribute to homelessness, particularly when they intersect with poverty and a lack of supports. As a result, social service providers in the Downtown Eastside define a senior as forty-five years of age and older. Finally, fewer women are counted among those that respond to the homeless count survey as they are more likely to be "hidden" (or couch surfing or staying with friends). Stigma and discrimination directed towards people who are homeless, such as assumptions that the poverty keeping people from securing a home is their own fault, compound the challenge of addressing the issue through systemic efforts.

Cost of Homelessness (Partial Response to Motion Making the Case for Housing All People Counted as Homeless in Shelters or on the Street - April 2, 2019)

Not only does homelessness have tragic consequences for the individual, it also is expensive for our City. People without a home, and lacking supports for mental illness and addiction, can draw significantly on social services for survival, including shelters, social service agencies and hospitals, and the criminal justice system. They also tend to interact more frequently with police, fire and paramedic services, and street and public realm maintenance activities. As highlighted in "Million Dollar Murray," managing homelessness through interactions with these institutions is more expensive than solving homelessness.⁶

⁵ The Homelessness Services Association of BC, Urban Matters, and BC Non-Profit Housing Association (2018). *2018 Report on Homeless Counts in B.C.* Prepared for BC Housing. Burnaby, BC: Metro Vancouver. <http://hsa-bc.ca/research-resources/2018-homeless-count/>

⁶ Malcom Gladwell (February 13, 2006). *The New Yorker*, P. 96
<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2006/02/13/million-dollar-murray>

A 2011 study by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives⁷ quantified the societal resources devoted to tackling health and crime-related costs of poverty, as well as the economic value of foregone economic activity and lower productivity that are associated with poverty. The study estimated that poverty costs BC between \$8.1 and \$9.2 billion annually. Poverty and a lack of housing that is affordable to people with very low incomes are two of the most significant contributors to homelessness and the status quo is very expensive. The research demonstrates by addressing these systemic and structural barriers, we not only achieve better social outcomes, but we also save money.

While limited, there is some evidence-based research on the costs of homelessness in Canada. A 2017 study published in Canadian Medical Association Journal⁸ examined the average annual costs that homeless people with mental illnesses generate for society as a whole. Following participants in the At Home/Chez Soi program for up to 2 years, the study measured costs to Canadian society such as costs for supportive housing, substance use treatment, emergency and hospital admissions, police and justice-sector involvement as well as costs to social services. The study found that, excluding medications, the overall average annual costs per person experiencing homelessness in Vancouver was roughly \$53,000. At Home/Chez Soi also demonstrated that providing housing first not only was more cost effective, but resulted in better health and housing outcomes for the individual.

The City of Vancouver (Engineering and the Homelessness Services Outreach Team), the Vancouver Police Department, the Vancouver Fire Department, and the Parks Board generated a very high level estimate of the costs associated with responding to people living outside. Just over \$8.5 million is spent annually by the City of Vancouver on the street urban issues responses, enforcement of the fire by-law, and providing support through the Homelessness Services Outreach team. The estimate breaks down as:

- Engineering - \$2.5m/year the streets urban issues response team (does not include sanitation and street cleaning)
- Homelessness Services Outreach Team - \$885,000/year
- Parks Board - \$3.3m/year for Park Rangers, maintenance and washroom repairs⁹
- Vancouver Police Department - \$1.2m/year based on the VPD's current deployment model related to homelessness.¹⁰
- Vancouver Fire Department - \$240,000/year for two dedicated staff 5/days per week.¹¹

⁷ Igljka, Ivanova, (2011) *The Cost of Poverty in BC*. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/BC%20Office/2011/07/CCPA_BC_cost_of_poverty_full_report.pdf

⁸ Latimer, E. A., Rabouin, D., Cao, Z., Ly, A., Powell, G., Aubry, T., Distasio, J., Hwang, S. W., Somers, J. M., Stergiopoulos, V., Veldhuizen, S., Moodie, E. E. M., Lesage, A., Goering, P. N. (2017). *Costs of services for homeless people with mental illness in 5 Canadian cities: a large prospective follow-up study*. Canadian Medical Association Journal, 5(3), E576-E585. <http://cmajopen.ca/content/5/3/E576.full.pdf+html?sid=9c8e03c6-9175-4985-85e6-ac34a83ac1e5>

⁹ Noting that not all washroom damage is the result of people living outside.

¹⁰ Currently, the VPD have one dedicated homeless outreach constable. The four additional staff would enable dedicated 7 days/week call outs that are currently being done by other officers.

¹¹ Similar to the VPD, Fire do not currently have dedicated staff and as a result are deploying staff from other areas to addressing issues related to homelessness such as encampments.

- Warming Centre operations - \$391,000 for the 2018/2019 season for staffing, food and other program expenses

The estimated \$8.5 million does not represent a full costing of current and needed resources to try to meet the needs of individuals experiencing homelessness. Staff are working on a more detailed and comprehensive breakdown and will provide Council with an update when completed.

The City is committed to connecting individuals experiencing homelessness to housing, income and supports and seeks to continuously improve service delivery to all citizens through the effective and efficient use of its limited resources. The key to addressing the issue is through strengthened collaborations with senior government, non-profit and other community partners and increased investment from senior levels of government.

Renewed Senior Government Commitment and Response to Homelessness

There has been a renewed drive by senior governments in making investments and taking action to help those in need and reduce homelessness.

Federal Government

In spring of 2018, the Federal governments announced that *Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy* will replace the existing *Homelessness Partnering Strategy* (HPS), which has invested roughly \$10m/year since 2014, with a continued focus on supporting communities to prevent and reduce homelessness in Canada. *Reaching Home* supports the goals of the *National Housing Strategy* of reducing chronic homelessness nationally by 50% by 2027-28. *Reaching Home* is focused on supporting an outcomes-based approach and has removed Housing First investment targets associated with HPS to give communities more flexibility to address local needs and priorities. The Strategy also prioritizes a Coordinated Access systems approach and each community will have 3 years to introduce a Coordinated Access system to prioritize people who are most in need of assistance and match them to appropriate housing and services.

At the local level, the federally-funded *Homelessness Partnering Strategy* was administered by Metro Vancouver, also known as the HPS Community Entity (CE) since 2009. The HPS CE partnered with a Community Advisory Board (HPS CAB) and managed the Call for Proposals process for the federal HPS funding. In March 2019, the Metro Vancouver Board of Directors passed a resolution that it would no longer be the CE for the Federal funding. VanCity Community Foundation is overseeing the program until a new CE is selected following the Federal government's call for proposals taking place later this spring.

Provincial Government

The Provincial government has made significant investments in housing, income, and supports to meet the needs of those experiencing homelessness or those at risk of homelessness. The most recent budget included \$10 million to create a province-wide rent bank to help people in need of financial support for housing. The Province also allocated \$291 million to build over 2,000 modular supportive homes across B.C – 600 of these homes are allocated to Vancouver.

Investments made in the development of new housing supply, increases to monthly disability and income assistance rates, and increased educational opportunities for children aging out of care are some examples of the significant investments made. In March 4, 2019, the Province also approved additional operating funding to keep eight temporary shelters and nearly 240 beds open for the next 12 months, until March 31, 2020. As directed by Council, we will continue working with our partners to secure additional temporary modular housing as set out in the recent council motion (Motion Calling for 600 More Units of Modular Housing in 2019 - December 5, 12, 2018)

In March 2019, the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction also created the Office of Homelessness Coordination as part of its Poverty Reduction Strategy, *TogetherBC*. This is a new work unit of government, responsible for coordinating government's response to homelessness with an approach that centres on:

- Prevention – making homelessness **rare** by preventing people from becoming homeless
- Immediate Response - taking immediate action to make homelessness **brief** should someone fall into homelessness
- Stability – ensuring that once a person has a roof over their head, give them the supports they need to make sure their experience with homelessness is a one-time occurrence or **rare**.
- Working Better Together: Coordination across government ministries, and collaboration with local government and with community partners.

BC Housing has also introduced the Homelessness Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS), a comprehensive data collection and case management system designed to provide a standardized assessment of client needs, individualized service plans and service records. Both BC Housing-funded shelter and homeless outreach services providers are using HIFIS, including the City's Homelessness Outreach Services. This new tool will facilitate a better understanding of the nature of homelessness, and support the development of policies and initiatives to address homelessness, and coordinate case management services.

The renewed commitment to housing and homelessness by senior government and the introduction to new tools such as HIFIS offer new and exciting opportunities in our collaborative efforts to prevent homelessness and create pathways out of homelessness. The City's integrated actions and solutions to reducing and preventing poverty will come forward to Council in fall 2019.

Bold New Approaches in our Rapid Response to Homelessness through Partnerships

Appendix A outlines key City-lead homeless services actions taken over the last year including an overview of temporary shelters, temporary modular housing, warming centres, new supportive housing, connections made by the Homelessness Services Outreach Team, and initiatives to address homelessness. These specific initiatives are over and above the ongoing services provided in the City's three community centres (Evelyn Saller, Carnegie Community Centre and Gathering Place) and the field house at

Oppenheimer Park which provide showers, laundry, and food and social, recreational, cultural programs and services. These services and programs that work to reduce the suffering that can be associated with homelessness or extreme poverty and engage people in their community to support their sense of belonging and dignity.

These actions lay the foundation for our continued work in our aim to meet the needs of those experiencing homelessness and those at risk of homelessness. While Vancouver has demonstrated leadership and developed best practices through the work of the Homelessness Services Outreach Team, other pilot projects, new initiatives such as warming centres, and establishment of low-barrier homelessness services such as the temporary winter shelters, the need for housing and services and necessary interventions to end homelessness continues to outpace our capacity to respond. The ongoing negative impacts associated with street homelessness and encampments continue to intensify in neighbourhoods across the city. Individuals living in tents or sleeping rough are at greater risk of deteriorating health and shorter life expectancy, being preyed upon and face health and safety risks by using fuel for heat and/or cooking. As noted above, a very high level estimate also demonstrates the significant city resources being spent on mitigating life safety risks for people living in tents, collecting garbage and debris as well as supporting individuals to get connected to housing, income and other supports.

Addressing this ongoing crisis and the significant burden it places on people made vulnerable by increasing costs of living, systemic exclusion and urban stress requires new approaches, innovative projects and strengthened partnerships to affect change.

A. Proposed Integrated Homelessness Services and Navigation Hub

Building on innovative models and lessons learned from other cities, the City, working with our provincial partners including BC Housing, Vancouver Coastal Health, the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction, are considering the creation of a new concept for an integrated homelessness services and navigation hub that would be operated by an experienced non-profit operator. The goal of the hub would be to better meet the needs of individuals experiencing chronic homelessness, living on the street and in encampments and dealing with complex health and other support needs but continue facing barriers to accessing housing and shelters. The hub provides an opportunity for individuals to be intensely supported to come inside and to develop the connections necessary to find and maintain their housing.

B. Establishing a Systems-Based Approach, Shared Measurement and Collective Impact

In order to end homelessness, enhanced coordination and collaboration between funders, policy makers and homelessness services and housing providers is necessary. In response to a need for a more coordinated approach, Home Front was created in 2015 through by a coalition of senior government stakeholders including BC Housing, the Health Authorities, the Ministry of Social Development & Poverty Reduction, Ministry of Housing, Ministry of Children and Families, the RCMP, the City of Vancouver and the City of Surrey, Lu'ma Native Housing Society (Aboriginal Homelessness Steering Committee of BC) and the Metro Vancouver Aboriginal Executive Council, as well as other non-profit partners in the region.

Home Front is founded on a simple but powerful principle that through the use of shared measurement and a collective impact approach, we can make homelessness rare, brief and one time in the region.

- Making homelessness *rare* is focused on prevention;
- Making homelessness *brief* is focused on interventions that quickly connect an individual that has fallen into homelessness with the necessary housing and other supports to move them out of homelessness.
- Making homelessness *rare* is focused on ensuring that an individual previously experiencing homelessness remains stably housed.

One of the most significant developments with the establishment of Home Front is the identification of indicators that can be used as shared measurement to inform decision making. Data on key indicators for rare, brief, and one time are being developed with key institutional partners (Vancouver Coastal and Fraser Health Authorities, BC Housing, Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction, the Ministry of Children and Families and others). While still in the early stages, the use of shared measurement for decision making is a powerful way to understand the gaps and opportunities to impact change across the region. Please also see “Homelessness Action Week and Supportive Housing Grants Council Report” (RTS No. 13139) which recommends a grant to support the collection and analysis of Indigenous indicators.

While Home Front focuses on shared measurement to support collaboration and coordination among funders and decision makers to prevent and promote pathways out of homelessness, the City is also participating in Help Seeker. Help Seeker is a Federally funded pilot project that will map the homelessness serving system to make sense of the many services, benefits, and initiatives operating in our ecosystem for those who are experiencing homelessness or are at risk of homelessness. Systems mapping is an ongoing and essential process to support those looking for help, those working on the frontlines, and policy/funder decision makers.

The Help Seeker systems map is location-based help services app that allows individuals experiencing homelessness to find the closest and most relevant service to meet their needs. The Help Seek platform will systematically map and inventory community, social and health services and will provide policy-makers, funders, and agencies data, analytics and user feedback in real-time to inform better decision-making and planning.

Improved data collection, shared measurement, systems mapping and real time understanding of who is accessing the system will further support improved coordination in our collective efforts to end homelessness.

Implications/Related Issues/Risk

Financial

As noted above, the City currently spends \$8.5 million annually on responding to Homelessness. Any additional funding needs resulting from any recommended next steps in this report will be brought to Council in a separate report.

Legal

There are no legal implications.

CONCLUSION

The impact of the housing affordability crisis is compounded for residents with very low incomes. As a result, those on the bottom rung of the housing continuum are more likely to fall into homelessness. While some are able to move out of homelessness, others have more difficulty and are increasingly becoming more entrenched, and suffering from addiction, mental health, and isolation. No simple step or single solution will address the challenge. The City is a leader in testing new approaches, investing significant resources and advocating for change at the senior government level. This report outlines City-lead actions to date to address homelessness, the changing context of senior government investment and approaches, as well as new proposed innovative approaches to alleviate personal suffering of those experiencing homelessness. The economic and moral imperative to house Vancouver's most vulnerable citizens is clear, and urgent and concerted action must be taken by all levels of government and community partners to address this crisis.

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2018/2019 Annual Report: Homelessness Services Actions and Next Steps

Key City and Partner Actions and Initiatives

The City of Vancouver has demonstrated municipal leadership and innovation in addressing homelessness through significant investment in housing and services, as well as policy, regulation, and advocacy to senior government on what our local needs are.

As part of our ongoing efforts to provide housing, shelter and supports to individuals experiencing homelessness, the City has partnered with the Province and private and non-profit partners on a variety of responses including providing outreach services to people who are homeless and at risk of homelessness, opening low-barrier temporary winter response shelters, opening warming centres in extremely cold weather, building and tenancing new social and supportive housing including Temporary Modular Housing, and supporting our non-profit partners to improve liveability and conditions in Single Room Occupancy (SRO) hotels. Providing options and choice along the housing continuum, and connecting individuals experiencing homelessness with necessary services, housing and supports provides a comprehensive response to homelessness.

The Homelessness Services Outreach Team

Actions

The Homelessness Services Outreach Team (“Outreach Team”) connects directly with individuals in need of housing, income, and other support services at their office at the corner of Powell and Dunlevy, as well as out in neighbourhoods throughout the city. Supported through the Provincial Homeless Outreach Program, the Outreach Team has been a leader in supporting individuals experiencing homelessness, as well as intervening to prevent homelessness for those at risk.

Over the 2018 year, the Outreach Team supported 5,180 individual clients to access a range of services and housing, including 2,665 new clients. Over the course of the year, the Outreach Team housed 930 individuals (this does not include the number of people that the outreach team supported to remain housed).

The Outreach Team has built a number of partnerships with other government agencies to break down barriers to accessing services. This includes:

- Partnering with the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction (MSDPR) to have a liaison worker based in the Outreach Team office 4 days a week to support the team’s client work and complete intakes for more complex income assistance cases.
- The Homelessness Services Outreach Team also has access 430 dedicated income assistance intake spots. This partnership enables clients to more rapidly access income assistance.
- A partnership with Canada Revenue Agency and Service Canada to have representatives at the Outreach office, for a full business day once a month to support clients with their taxes, accessing pensions and assisting with identification.

The Outreach Team operates an ID Bank funded by BC Housing which enables the safe storage of important documents. Lost and stolen ID poses a significant barrier in

accessing income, housing and other important services. The Outreach Team works with clients to apply for and secure the necessary ID required to gain access to such services, and then stores all documents for safe-keeping. In 2018, the Outreach Team applied for over 1,500 unique identification documents, including birth certificates, Citizenship Certificates, Permanent Resident Cards and Photo Services Cards. There are currently 1,200 clients with ID stored with the Outreach Team.

The Outreach Team also operates a rent supplement program, funded by BC Housing, offering one-time and monthly rent supplement payments to those who are homeless moving into housing, or those at-risk of homelessness and experiencing financial crisis. Supplements can also take the form of moving costs, storage and repatriation home. In 2018, the Outreach Team supported 450 unique clients through the rent supplement program.

Over the last few months, the Outreach Team has also been actively working with individuals in the growing encampment at Oppenheimer Park. The Team is visiting daily and as of May 30, was engaged with 52 people who expressed a desire to work with the team. Of those, staff are actively working with 24 of those individuals and are at different stages of arranging income, housing and health service provision

Moving Forward

The Homelessness Services Outreach Team will continue to provide support to those needing income, housing and referrals to health and other supports. The Outreach Team will also play a key role and function in the proposed Integrated Navigation and Services Centre discussed in more detail below.

Temporary Winter Shelters

Actions

Since 2009, temporary winter shelters beds have been opened to bring people inside during the coldest, wettest months of the year. These shelters have been critical to connecting individuals who would otherwise be on the street with housing, health and other necessary support services. Over the 2018/2019 winter, the City, in partnership with BC Housing and non-profit shelter operators, opened 298 beds across 10 locations in Vancouver. The temporary shelters opened in November and remained open every night throughout the winter, providing a place to sleep, food and connections to services for guests. The temporary winter shelter beds remained at capacity consistently throughout the winter season.

Moving Forward

In March 4, 2019, the Province approved additional operating funding to keep eight temporary shelters and nearly 240 beds open for the next 12 months, until March 31, 2020. The demand for shelters continues and staff will work with BC Housing to identify opportunities to open additional sites in the coming year to ensure we continue to provide opportunities for people to come inside.

Warming Centres

Actions

Since 2017, the City has opened warming centres in City-run facilities to respond to periods of extreme weather that threaten the life safety of individuals who are sleeping outside. This winter, the City and non-profit partners made 100 warming centre spaces

available for people to come inside to get warm, and have a dry place to sleep. The 100 spaces were accessed by just over 6,200 individuals¹² over the course of the season.

Moving Forward

The City will continue to identify City-run facilities to provide warming centres spaces as they provide a low-barrier option for people otherwise sleeping outside, targeting at least 100 for winter 2019/2020..

Supporting Tenants, Enabling Pathways (STEP) Pilot Project

Actions

The Supporting Tenants, Enabling Pathways (STEP) pilot project is a demonstration project between the City, StreettoHome Foundation, BC Housing and Vancouver Coastal Health. The goal of the two-year pilot is to ensure supportive housing units in Vancouver are occupied by people who are most in need of supports, and those who can and want to live more independently have support to move on to other affordable housing options. Over the course of the pilot, the Homelessness Services Outreach Team will identify and provide support to 100 individuals tenants who move on to their preferred choice of subsidized, affordable housing.

To date, the pilot has housed 113 people (including tenants moved and units backfilled). The pilot is demonstrating that there are people living in supportive housing who can move on to more independent living.

Moving Forward

The pilot is demonstrating success that some tenants want to move and can do so successfully when supported and provided with affordable housing options. As a result, tenants requiring more support can backfill the limited supportive housing units available. Staff will work to secure more and homes and rent subsidies and will continue to monitor and evaluate the pilot with the goal of working with our partners to extend the pilot upon completion in November 2019.

Poverty Reduction

Actions

Reducing poverty - a key driver of homelessness – is critical to homelessness prevention. Vancouver is experiencing high levels of ongoing and complex poverty, requiring a whole of government approach to both acute crisis cycles and long term social sustainability. From an equity lens, overrepresentation of Indigenous (41%) and new immigrant or temporary resident population (40%) in Vancouver – people who haven't assimilated into dominant systems and culture – is found in Vancouver's Low-Income Measure (LIM) data. Young people under the age of 25 also struggling to make ends meet – including children living in poverty, youth aging out of care, and students attending universities and colleges in Vancouver

The City's poverty reduction plan development process has proceeded alongside the Provincial and Federal processes to create poverty reduction plans for senior levels of government. The City has submitted recommendations to both senior governments in consultation with community partners. The Metro Vancouver Aboriginal Executive Council (MVAEC) is developing an integrated Urban Indigenous Strategy to promote

¹² These are not unique guests.

culturally connected and interconnected actions to promote prosperity for urban Indigenous residents. An MVAEC policy conference and policy papers have also been influential in the first phase of engagement for the City's poverty reduction plan, including the Potlatch Economy paper, outlining economic well-being from a cultural perspective, as well as The Psychology of Poverty, providing a self-determination approach to healing from the intergenerational impacts of colonialism, structural and systemic violence and discrimination. The alignment of leadership and partnerships focused on poverty reduction within social sustainability goals provides a rare opportunity for the City to work in partnership with other levels of government and community partners to mutually reinforce and align efforts that promote meaningful actions for all Vancouverites struggling to make ends meet.

A first phase of engagement with people living in deep levels of poverty has been completed and 'What We Heard' released. The City is currently undertaking the second phase of community engagement to develop a Poverty Reduction Plan

Moving Forward

The Plan will be presented to Council in fall 2019, and will identify the ways in which the City can reduce poverty, as well as influence and coordinate with other levels of government on poverty reduction goals and actions.

Homelessness Services Grants

The City's Homelessness Services Grants support the important work of non-profit partners in delivering City priorities to address homelessness.

Actions

Streethome Foundation

Streethome Foundation was established in 2008 through a partnership between the City of Vancouver, the Province of British Columbia and the Vancouver Foundation. Each partner contributed \$500,000 towards start-up funding at that time. For the previous eight years, the City has also awarded an annual operating grant to support the organization in its commitment to expending donor dollars directly for homelessness prevention initiatives, as well as new supportive housing for people who are homeless and at risk of homelessness. Leveraging private sector funds, Streethome has contributed more than \$31 million to supportive housing and prevention projects, including 23 buildings, providing 1,352 homes. It is also exploring a private-sector role in addressing the root causes of homelessness, including unemployment and addiction.

Vancouver Rent Bank

The Vancouver Rent Bank increases housing stability by preventing evictions and homelessness, as well as loss of essential utilities. The VRB provides small, one-time interest-free loans to low-income people in temporary financial crisis, as well as providing advocacy and referral services. The City has awarded \$75,000 to the Network of Inner City Community Services Society (NICCSS) for 2019-2020 funding to operate the Vancouver Rent Bank. Since being established in 2012, the Rent Bank has provided 662 loans and helped 892 individuals, including 206 children, from becoming homeless. In its recent budget, the Provincial government has allocated funding for a provincial rent bank, building on successful models such as the Vancouver Rent Bank.

Homelessness Action Week

Since 2009, the City's Homelessness Action Week Grant program has supported numerous non-profit societies to raise awareness and reduce stigma about homelessness, and provide direct support to people experiencing homelessness. Last year, City Council approved 16 HAW Grants (\$46,000 in total) to various community-based non-profits, as well as nine new temporary modular housing grants (\$27,000 in total) to benefit tenants living in the newly created temporary modular housing sites and to support neighbourhood integration and participation.

Addressing Stigma

Since 2013, City staff have supported people with lived experience of homelessness to share their personal stories and educate the public, in particular students in secondary and post-secondary institutions. Between January and December 2018, a total of fourteen presentations were held in 9 schools secondary and university classrooms to almost 525 students. These presentations provide opportunities to challenge myths and stereotypes about homelessness, raise awareness, and build empathy and understanding.

Moving Forward

Staff will continue to bring forward grant recommendations as funding permits to support a variety of initiatives developed and implemented by non-profit organizations. For example, this year's HAW grants include an additional funding stream to support projects that focus on creative approaches to increasing community awareness of homelessness. Funding is targeted to projects that build greater community understanding of the drivers and solutions to homelessness including supportive housing & health supports, engaging the voices of those with lived experience, targeting a unique audience, and decreasing the stigma associated with homelessness and the exclusion experienced by Vancouverites experiencing homelessness.

Increasing and Improving Housing for Very Low-Income Residents

Actions

Safe, secure, and affordable housing are critical to ending homelessness. Adopted in 2017, Housing Vancouver is the City's strategy to address Vancouver's housing crisis, targeting 72,000 new homes over 10 years (2018-2027). The Strategy seeks to enable the 'Right Supply' of housing for people who live and work in Vancouver, which includes housing options that are affordable to local incomes and a shift to more social, supportive, and rental housing. The strategy is based on three core principles, two of which focus on households with low-incomes: protect existing affordable housing for the future and ensure support for vulnerable residents.

Protecting the Existing Affordable Housing Stock:

While typically considered housing of last resort before homelessness, Single Room Occupancy (SRO) hotels continue to play an important role in the housing continuum. The Single Room Occupancy (SRO) Revitalization Action Plan (2017) identifies a series of actions to improve the existing stock, with a longer term goal of replacing SROs with self-contained social housing. From 2015 to 2018, SRA permits and capital contributions were approved for five SRA designated buildings resulting in liveability upgrades to 255 rooms and securing 129 rooms at the shelter component of income assistance.

Following years of mismanagement and ongoing serious violations of health, safety and standards of maintenance by-laws, the City initiated expropriation proceedings for the Balmoral and Regent Hotels in July 2018. Filing the expropriation notice is the first step in the expropriation process that may result in the transfer of these two properties to public ownership.

Creating New Social and Supportive Housing

Housing Vancouver identifies the need for, 12,000 units of social and supportive housing for households with incomes less than \$15,000 over the next 10 years. Based on the *Housing Vancouver Annual Progress Report and Data Book*, between January 1, 2017 and December 31, 2018, 3,640 social and supportive housing units were approved. This includes 962 units of non-market self-contained housing renting at the shelter component of income assistance (\$375/month).

Creating new Temporary Modular Supportive Housing

In September 2017, the provincial government announced funding for 2,000 temporary modular homes across BC to be provided for people who are homeless, with 600 to be delivered in Vancouver. By March 2019, 606 homes over 10 sites were completed - unprecedented in the delivering new supply for individuals experiencing homelessness or those at risk for homelessness. The units are self-contained with a washroom and kitchen and rent at the shelter component of income assistance. Tenants also have access to a range of services and programs to support housing stability.

Through the Coordinated Access and Assessment process, the Homelessness Services Outreach Team, BC Housing, and the housing operator supported the tenancing of the buildings. As of May 10, the tenant mix in the 598 units currently occupied includes:

- 45% women
- 43% Indigenous
- 83% homeless (48% street homeless and 52% sheltered homeless)
- 17% from SROs or housing pending eviction

The City continues to engage with senior government to express the need for investment and commitment to creating new supply, including additional Temporary Modular Supportive Housing (Motion Calling for 600 More Modular Homes in 2019, December 5, 12, 2018).

In its ongoing commitment to being a City of Reconciliation, staff will also be bringing forward a report to Council (scheduled for DATE RTS) recommending a grant to MVAEC contribute to fund a position to support the development of relevant indicators, data collection and analysis to better understand indigenous homelessness.

Addressing Indigenous Homelessness

People of Aboriginal/Indigenous identity have consistently been overrepresented in Vancouver's homeless population. The 2018 count found that 40 percent of the city's homeless population reported Indigenous identity, while people of Indigenous identity make up 2.2 percent of the city's general population – this finding is consistent with counts in previous years and in other counts in the region and the Province.

Recognizing the truth of how Indigenous peoples have been marginalized, the City of Vancouver is a City of Reconciliation, and is committed to addressing the disproportionate impact of homelessness on the urban Indigenous community. The City continues to work in partnership with the Metro Vancouver Aboriginal Executive Council (MVAEC), and other Indigenous housing and wellness providers to support the development of an Urban Indigenous Strategy. As part of this work, the City aims to support the delivery of a minimum of 600-700 Indigenous society owned or operated affordable homes by 2022.

In 2018, 27 social housing units operated by Vancouver Native Housing Society opened. In addition, 216 new homes were approved that will be owned or operated by an Indigenous operator, including a recently completed 98 temporary modular supportive homes that will help address Indigenous homelessness through priority outreach and tenanting.

Moving Forward

Protecting the existing affordable rental stock and meeting our ambitious targets of increasing the new supply of housing affordable to those with very low-incomes continues to be a priority for the City of Vancouver. In addition to the 202 shelter rate temporary modular homes that were completed in 2019 and additional 183 shelter rate homes will be completed by 2020 (noting that a 159 of those are replacement units in Roddan Lodge).

The City had demonstrated commitment and leadership to addressing the needs of Vancouver citizens across the housing continuum, including those that are marginalized as demonstrated by the summary of key actions and initiatives taken over the last year.