



Emergency COVID-19 Relief for Unsheltered Vancouver Residents (RTS: 014069) - Response to Motion Summary

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- Council Motion
 - Options
 - Additional considerations
- Approach
- Response to options
- Summary – site options and costs
- Next steps

- Motion recognizes:
 - homelessness as complex challenge requiring solutions from all orders of government, Indigenous, businesses, community organizations and individuals;
 - temporary shelters for people experiencing homelessness are not the solution
 - Need to address immediate concerns around public realm, safety and unsheltered individuals
- Staff directed to identify feasibility and costs of accelerating the creation of emergency housing for Vancouver residents experiencing unsheltered homelessness

- Option 1:
 - Leasing or purchasing housing units including hotels, single-room occupancy residences, and other available housing stock
- Option 2:
 - Establishing a Temporary Disaster Relief Shelter framework on a location or locations that may be vacant public or private land or structure; may be owned by the City of Vancouver; the Province of BC or the Federal Government; are not on designated or undesignated parkland (parks); are in general proximity to DTES; are serviceable for power, water, and related services; and can support appropriately physically distanced tents and services
- Option 3:
 - Temporarily converting City-owned buildings excluding community centres or childcare and daycare into emergency housing or shelter space
- Option 4:
 - Establishing temporary tiny house villages on vacant public or private land
- Option 5:
 - Providing a serviced space or spaces for low income RV residents

Staff also directed to:

- Consider how options, if implemented, would facilitate decampments in Vancouver Parks and other public spaces
- Work with BC Housing and VCH to:
 - develop an intake and referral process to address most critical unsheltered needs
 - develop rules and standards of operation; best practices to ensure safety, security, respect and dignity for all
 - outline supportive services that make people with various gifts and needs feel welcome and safe
- Facilitate work between Engineering, VPD and other agencies to explore a 300 metre area to proactively reduce any ancillary impacts to improve integration with adjacent businesses and residents
- Once action is determined, articulate the plan and process to adjacent businesses and residents, and develop a feedback mechanism and good neighbor agreements
- Consult meaningfully with individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness
- Additional directions regarding regional leadership and contributions to a regional response will be reported back in the future after staff are able to engage in these discussions

- Cross departmental effort
- Due to limited time, provide high-level overview of options
- **Additional due diligence required** - including detailed financial and site feasibility analysis if staff directed to pursue any of the options.
- Each option included brief scan of various models, a high-level scan of site options and costs, as well as considerations
 - These are not recommendations – any sites that are presented in the memo are only done so because they, to some extent, may be physically feasible
 - Insufficient time for adequate consultation

- Provincial government and BC Housing staff are not able to indicate any position of support for any responses to the Strathcona encampment or homelessness generally in Vancouver during this election period.
- Office of the Chief MHO (VCH) reviewed options for responding to homelessness and encampments:
 - require additional time and details to examine each in the context of the on-going COVID pandemic and overdose crisis.
 - caution against any move to disband currently existing homeless encampments without due consideration of the implications of these dual emergencies.
 - Support prioritizing safe, indoor housing options over additional encampments.

- Identified ~290 units available for purchase:
 - \$125-\$240m purchase costs
 - \$11m annual operating costs
- Long standing policy that providing safe, secure and affordable housing with health and other supports, critical to ending homelessness.
- History of partnerships with senior government and non-profit housing providers to support the delivery of housing for individuals experiencing homelessness.
- City role - historically, City has provided land for housing and shelter creation, capital grants to non-profits, and advocacy to secure senior government funding commitments.
- Significant financial challenge for the City absent funding partnerships with senior governments for both capital and ongoing operating.
- Federal: \$1b new *Rapid Housing Initiative* (RHI) (does not include ongoing operating)

Option 2 – Establish Temporary Disaster Relief Shelter Framework

- Understood as outdoor shelter (similar to displaced peoples camps or managed/sanctioned homeless encampments).
- Strathcona Park encampment leadership expressed desire for range of Indigenous (Indigenous & peer-led) and non-Indigenous models.
- Surveyed 83 unique individuals sleeping outside:
 - 75% (62 people) had concerns regarding personal safety and security when considering staying in a managed encampment.
 - 22% (18 out of 46 people) who would consider staying in a managed encampment would do so only with some services and supports being provided including security, food, and showers (mentioned most often), and harm reduction supports, outreach supports to end their homelessness, electricity, storage, and garbage pick-up (mentioned less often).
- Significant challenge in identifying sites that might meet physical requirements; further due diligence required and there are no sites that will not have surrounding community impacts

Options 3 – Temporarily Converting City Buildings to Shelter/Housing

- Consistent with our long standing partnership with BC Housing (e.g., temporary shelter capacity, Emergency Response Centres in response to COVID, EWRs, Navigation Centre).
- Shelters – established service model with range of approaches (e.g., welcome couples, pets, provide storage for their belongings, access to harm reduction and OPS services, 24/7, etc.).
- Provides indoor locations for individuals to be connected with supports, generally proven to be more effective than delivering these services outdoors.
- Limited sites available; renovations and operating costs significant
- Federal: \$236.7m *Reaching Home (COVID)*
- Federal/Provincial: \$100m for province-wide *Safe Re-Start program* to support individuals experiencing homelessness and to address associated negative community impacts

- Significant interest from business and academic community
- Variety of ‘house’ types, as well as operating and management models
 - 100sf shed like structure with no heat, power or water, with shared bathrooms and kitchens provided separately in the ‘village’ to larger (200sf) and self-contained units
 - Self governed, co-op models, habitat for humanity sweat equity / sweat property maintenance model
 - Predominantly high-barrier with strict code of conducts (no drugs or alcohol) and can include probationary period agreements.
- Heat, power, and private bathroom and microwave should be considered minimum standard if this model is advanced.
- Site identification likewise a challenge given lack of vacant lots
- Zoning and building by-law changes likely required
- Highest and best use considerations: if using a developable lot, lose the opportunity to maximize housing output

- Homelessness Services Outreach Team engagement with RV dwellers largely unsuccessful
 - many don't consider themselves to be experiencing homelessness.
- US cities moving away from RV parking (expensive, health and safety issues) to safe parking programs targeted to people living in their *cars* (who are at risk, & motivated to take offers of housing and support).
- Has not largely been explored in Canada
- Finding a site large enough to accommodate all RVs in Vancouver would be challenging so a number of smaller sites may be an option.

Summary – Site Options and Costs



Type	Forgone revenue (Annual)	Purchase Cost	Tenant Improvements	Operating (Annual)
CoV-Owned Sites				
Option 1: Purchase hotels, apartment buildings (290 units)	N/A	\$125m-204m	TBC	\$10.9m
Option 2: Emergency Relief Shelter (8 potential sites)	\$963k	N/A	\$100k-\$4m (sprung shelter)	\$1.8m
Option3: Convert CoV building into shelter/housing (3 buildings, 143 spaces/units)	\$1.275m	N/A	\$550K	\$5.4m
Option 4: Tiny Home Village	\$963k	\$80k-\$120k/house	TBC	TBC
Option 5: RV Park	\$963k	TBC	TBC	TBC
Non-COV Site				
No site identified but based on market rent on empty lots - Non COV-site (rental) for Options	Anticipated Annual Cost \$60,000- \$80,000	N/A	TBC	TBC

Options Outcome Summary



Option	Cost effectiveness	Take Up	Space Attributes	Expediency	Impact	Partner Support
Lease/purchase vacant apartment building	High	High	High	High	High	Likely
Lease/purchase vacant apartment commercial hotel	High	High	High	High	High	Likely
Lease/purchase vacant SRO***	Medium	Medium	Low	High	High	Likely
Temporary Disaster Relief Shelter	Low	Medium	Low	Medium	Low	Low
Converting City-owned building to temporary shelter	Medium	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium	Likely
Tiny Home (sleeping pod with bathroom)	Low	High	Medium	Low	Medium	Low
RV Park	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low

- **Cost effectiveness:** based on overall capital and operating costs in relation to health and housing outcomes
- **Take-up:** likelihood of take-up by people that are currently unsheltered considering personal choice, location/proximity to preferred neighbourhood, incentive to stay in place
- **Space attributes:** appropriateness considering infection control, hygiene, spacing, accessibility, safety
- **Expediency:** availability of the site/building
- **Impact:** housing and health outcomes associated with the option
- **Partner support:** Does the model reflect past partnership models or do staff have some sense of potential likelihood of support. (Likely = follows existing partnership model)

- For whichever option Council decides to advance, further work is required:
 - Secure partnerships and funding from senior government and identify funding source for City contributions;
 - Carrying out further due diligence on sites, including further impact analysis, consultation with City departments, VPD, Fire, to explore options to proactively reduce any ancillary camping, litter, disorder, criminal activity or other impacts within a 300 metre of each site and to improve integration with adjacent businesses and residents
 - Engage people living in encampments such as Strathcona Park on implementation
 - Carry out necessary community consultation and engagement, and regulatory process including good neighbour agreements
 - Finalize operating model for each option/site including the intake and referral process; required services and supports, rules and standards of operation to ensure safety, security, respect and dignity for residents

- 1. Staff list most of the options under “Option 1” as being high expediency. Could we get a clearer sense of how quickly we think these units could be available to move people in (pending federal \$)? Ie. How quick is “high expediency”?**
 - Dependent on negotiating and purchasing process/timeline
 - Vacant units can be quickly tenanted – housing/hotel with private bathroom preferred over other options
 - City staff should caution that it is still minimum 6 months and with Rental 100’s time frame is more like 1 year

2. Who is our current lease at 2400 Kingsway with? Are some of those units currently empty? And do staff think we could negotiate a faster transition out of that lease for the units that are currently empty?

- 2400 Kingsway is under a management services agreement and all tenants are short-term stays under the Hotel Act, (operator is IHM Limited)
- 2400 Motel could likely be operationalized and made available more quickly than 6 months as it is City of Vancouver owned. There may be financial implications terminating quicker than 6 months.
- Yes, 65 units are available at present (confirmed with existing management)

3. Are staff looking at utilizing the Jericho Hostel? Is it true that the city owns that site, and currently leases it out to HI to run the hostel? How many units could be available there?

The Hostel is leased by the Park Board to the hostel operator. Staff will be following up with the Hostel to determine feasibility.

Questions