



COUNCIL REPORT

Report Date: November 14, 2023
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Meeting Date: November 29, 2023
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TO: Standing Committee on Policy and Strategic Priorities
FROM: General Manager of Arts, Culture and Community Services
SUBJECT: Joining UN-Habitat's Quality of Life Initiative as a Pilot City

Recommendations

- A. THAT Council approve the City's expression of interest in UN-Habitat's Quality of Life Initiative - Pilot City Program, to improve and measure the quality of life in our communities by helping develop a global quality of life standard and performance monitoring tool.
- B. THAT Council authorize Staff to engage in the Quality of Life Initiative, and the General Manager of Arts, Culture and Community Services to execute and deliver on behalf of the City all legal and other agreements required to implement Recommendation A.

Purpose and Executive Summary

This report seeks Council approval for Vancouver to partner with the United Nations Human Settlements Program (UN-Habitat) to be a pilot city in the development of a global quality of life index. UN-Habitat has invited Vancouver to be one of eight pilot cities in the development of this initiative, and there is no cost to the City to participate.

Cities participating in the pilot will engage with UN-Habitat staff and peer cities over the next 12 months, developing and testing indicators of quality of life in their local context. The potential benefits to Vancouver include access to technical expertise, support for innovative data collection methods, and new partnerships to build data and research capacity.

The initiative aligns with the planned renewal of Vancouver's social sustainability plan (Healthy City Strategy), and staff will seek Council direction with respect to that work in early 2024.

Council Authority/Previous Decisions

On [October 29, 2014](#), Council approved the vision, principles, goals, targets, and indicators of the Healthy City Strategy as Vancouver's overall social sustainability plan through 2025.

On [January 21, 2020](#), Council directed staff to review the global Sustainable Development Goals while refreshing the Healthy City Strategy, and to explore opportunities for the City to benefit from and contribute to work on these goals.

On [October 31, 2023](#), Council adopted its strategic priorities for the 2023-2026 period, including a priority outcome of ensuring Vancouver residents are physically and mentally healthy, with updating the Healthy City Strategy as an example of key aligned work.

City Manager's Comments

The City Manager concurs with the foregoing recommendations.

Context and Background

Social Development and Sustainability Planning

Vancouver has a longstanding policy commitment to sustainability, including social, environmental, economic, and cultural pillars. The [Healthy City Strategy](#) is Vancouver's current social sustainability plan, with goals and targets through 2025. Renewing Vancouver's social sustainability plan has been delayed due to other priorities in recent years but, subject to Council direction, ACCS staff are planning to undertake this work in 2024.

Meanwhile, work has continued to advance implementation of the Healthy City Strategy through partnerships, particularly around population health data and performance monitoring. The City has been a member of the [Partnership for Healthy Cities](#) since 2019, enabling the development of the [Healthy City Dashboard](#) and ongoing work on Urban Indigenous data. Vancouver received the [Partnership for Healthy Cities Award](#) in March 2023, including \$150,000 USD to support further Healthy City policy work.

UN Habitat and the Quality of Life Initiative

[UN-Habitat](#) works to promote socially and environmentally sustainable communities, and leads implementation of the [Sustainable Development Goal](#) to make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. The Quality of Life Initiative is a new UN-Habitat project to focus on measuring and promoting quality of life in urban development, with a global standard and performance-monitoring tool for local governments planned to launch in 2024. City of Vancouver staff have participated in consultations and meetings with UN-Habitat about the Initiative, and there is now an opportunity to develop a formal partnership by becoming a pilot city to co-create and implement the monitoring tool. This will lead to a Vancouver-specific quality of life index aligned with the global framework.

Discussion

Benefits of Participating in the UN Pilot

Partnering with UN-Habitat to pilot a global quality of life measure is a strategic opportunity to advance local policy while contributing to global goals. If Council approves this partnership, staff will incorporate work with UN-Habitat into existing funded work programs and priorities, with no additional financial resources required. Vancouver would leverage existing Healthy City research and data work to contribute to this initiative. Cities participating in the pilot will participate in discussions, workshops, and information sessions with UN-Habitat staff and peer

cities over the next 12 months, developing and testing indicators of quality of life in their local context. The potential benefits to Vancouver include access to technical expertise, support for innovative data collection methods, and new partnerships to build data and research capacity.

Alignment with Planned Work

Staff plan to report to Council in Q1 2024 to seek direction on scope and work plan for renewing Vancouver's social sustainability framework. Previous evaluation of the Healthy City Strategy recognized the strength of its conceptual framework, its goals to promote health equity, and its upstream approach to social development—while identifying opportunities to improve coordination and implementation structures, such as systems to use data effectively for strategic decision-making and collaborative action. Participating in the Quality of Life pilot would enhance Vancouver's capacity in this area, as well as being a platform to re-engage partners in social sustainability work.

This project would align with multiple strategic priorities approved by Council on October 31, 2023, particularly the strategic objective to be a healthy, inclusive, and equitable city. It would also support responsible financial management by leveraging external resources and in-kind supports.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications associated with this report's recommendations. City staff participation in this initiative would be managed within existing funded positions and work programs. Costs associated with City staff participation in in-person meetings would be funded by UN-Habitat.

Legal Implications

There are no legal implications associated with this report's recommendations.

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