

COUNCIL REPORT

Report Date:April 9, 2024Contact:Margaret WittgensContact No.:604.871.6858RTS No.:16138VanRIMS No.:08-2000-20Meeting Date:May 8, 2024Submit comments to Council

TO: Standing Committee on Policy and Strategic Priorities

- FROM: General Manager of Arts, Culture and Community Services
- SUBJECT: Approach to Renewing the Healthy City Strategy as Vancouver's Social Sustainability Plan

Recommendations

- A. THAT Council approve, in principle, the approach, scope, and timeline for refreshing the Healthy City Strategy as Vancouver's overall strategic framework for social sustainability, as outlined in this report.
- B. THAT Council direct staff to report back with recommendations for the updated Healthy City strategic framework later in 2024.

Purpose and Executive Summary

The Healthy City Strategy (HCS) is Vancouver's strategic framework for social sustainability. The original HCS was co-developed with Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) and a multi-sectoral leadership table and adopted by Council in 2014. The original HCS goals extended to 2025, and Council has identified an update to the HCS as a strategic priority for the current term.

This report proposes an approach to refreshing the HCS in 2024, building on its strengths, partnerships, and relationships while developing clearer roles and accountabilities for a more collaborative and nimbler implementation model. The refresh will respond to significant change in Vancouver since the original HCS was adopted. VCH is a co-lead of the HCS and would be a key partner in the strategy's refresh process. If Council approves the recommendations, staff will conduct research, targeted engagement, and policy development over the summer and fall, and report back with recommendations for a refreshed HCS in late 2024.

Council Authority / Previous Decisions

On <u>October 29, 2014</u>, Council approved the vision, principles, goals, targets, and indicators of the Healthy City Strategy as Vancouver's social sustainability plan through 2025. On <u>July 8</u>, <u>2015</u>, Council approved a Healthy City Action Plan to implement a number of City-led actions.

On <u>January 21, 2020</u>, Council directed staff to review the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) while refreshing the Healthy City Strategy, and to explore opportunities for the City to benefit from and contribute to work on them.

On <u>November 29, 2023</u>, Council approved a pilot project with UN-Habitat to measure urban quality of life in alignment with the SDGs.

On <u>October 31, 2023</u>, Council approved its <u>Strategic Priorities</u> for the 2023-2026 term, including a strategic objective of a healthy, inclusive, and equitable city; and a specific aligned action to update the City's Healthy City Strategy.

Appendix A provides further detail on Council decisions, policies, and projects that led to the creation of the Healthy City Strategy.

City Manager's Comments

The City Manager concurs with the foregoing recommendations.

Context and Background

Purpose of the Healthy City Strategy as a social sustainability framework

The City of Vancouver has a number of strategies, policies, and plans that guide its actions and investments. Within the City's policy ecosystem, the Healthy City Strategy (HCS) serves as the City's overarching social sustainability policy. It includes a vision of social sustainability, presents long-term goals, identifies clear roles and partnerships, and outlines a framework for monitoring and evaluation of the social development outcomes that the City is working toward.

Given the diverse range of influences that impact a community's social development and sustainability-many beyond local government jurisdiction-any successful social sustainability framework must also include mechanisms to engage other governments, partners, and sectors to contribute to shared goals and outcomes. Likewise, within the City, while the Social Policy and Projects division coordinates much of the social sustainability work, it is necessarily interdepartmental, and is the responsibility of all City departments.

Understanding social sustainability, health and well-being

The majority of health outcomes are shaped by social determinants: socioeconomic conditions, access to services, and the communities and environments that people interact with. A healthy and engaged population is critical to the City's social, economic, and cultural well-being. Though the City of Vancouver does not provide direct health services, it has influence over many social determinants of health, particularly those relating to the physical form of the city, and also plays an important role as a convenor and advocate for other sectors and levels of government that influence the health of people in Vancouver.

Local context for social sustainability

Vancouver has significant assets for health and well-being. The Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh peoples have sustained healthy communities on these lands and waters since time immemorial. Vancouver is also a diverse, welcoming community for many people who have come to the city for connection, opportunity, and self-expression, including large communities of newcomers.

Vancouver is known for high quality of life and a physical form that supports connected, compact, and liveable communities with high use of sustainable transportation. But these assets are not equitably shared across the population of Vancouver, and the City faces substantial challenges in affordability, belonging, and safety. Ongoing health emergencies reflect the profound gaps in basic needs and services that many people experience. In the <u>2023 Civic Satisfaction Survey</u>, a majority of respondents reported worsening quality of life, and social issues remain a top concern.

Existing HCS framework, implementation model, and evaluation

Approved by Council in 2014 as Vancouver's social sustainability framework, the HCS aligns with principles of sustainability—meeting the needs of today without compromising the wellbeing of future generations—that is a foundation for City policy and decision-making. The HCS is aligned with the World Health Organization's definition of a healthy city as one that is continually improving the conditions that enable health and well-being for all of its residents. The HCS is based on a broad understanding of health and addresses the interconnected well-being of Vancouver's people, communities, and environments.

The original Healthy City Strategy established a framework with the following elements:

- An overall vision ("A Healthy City for All") for equitable outcomes and access to health;
- Principles and assumptions to shape the work, including a broad understanding of health, an upstream systems approach, collaboration, and evidence-informed decisions;
- Interconnected focus areas on people's basic rights and needs, connected and engaged communities, and health-promoting environments;
- A commitment to 13 long-term goals reflecting determinants of health;
- Targets through 2025 and ongoing population health indicators to monitor and evaluate progress and engage communities in taking action.

This framework was developed collaboratively with a multi-sectoral leadership table, co-chaired by the City Manager and the Chief Medical Health Officer at Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH). It included a formal MOU between the City and VCH to enable ongoing policy collaboration, and to fulfill statutory requirements in the *BC Public Health Act* that require Medical Health Officers to provide advice to local governments on policies that may impact public health issues, and local governments are required to consider the advice and information they provide.

The broad and holistic concept of health in the HCS also resonates with Indigenous well-being concepts, builds on international frameworks such as the SDGs, enables collaborative contributions, and reflects that well-being is the product of many interconnected factors.

In 2015, Council approved a first implementation action plan committing the City to a number of specific actions. These included a mix of operational practices (e.g. age-friendly and equity training for staff), partnerships (e.g. a formal MOU with the Metro Vancouver Aboriginal Executive Council), policies (e.g. social procurement), pilot projects (e.g. research in enabling social connections in multi-unit housing), and further strategy development (e.g. development of the City's Equity Framework). Further implementation continues beyond the original action plan. Appendix B provides more detail on progress toward the current HCS goals.

A formal evaluation of the HCS was completed by a consultant in 2017. Following the completion of this action plan and evaluation process, staff worked with key partners in 2018

and 2019 to develop a new implementation model. This work was intended to result in recommendations to Council in 2020, but was delayed due to many factors including the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, emerging Council priorities, and significant staff turnover.

Current HCS work and partnerships

Work has continued to advance the goals of the HCS through partnerships and networks, and to build critical governance, policy, and data infrastructure which could support implementation of a refreshed strategy.

Today, the HCS continues to inform policy, investment, and operational decisions, particularly within the Arts, Culture, and Community Services department. For example, Social Policy grants are evaluated based on their alignment with HCS goals, and City staff continue to work closely with VCH through regular meetings, information sharing, and policy review.

The HCS is recognized as strong policy and leading practice. It has been recognized with awards from the Planning Institute of BC (2015), the Community Data Program (2018), and the Partnership for Healthy Cities (2023). Since 2019, Vancouver has been a member of the Partnership for Healthy Cities (PHC), a global network of cities supported by Bloomberg Philanthropies in partnership with the World Health Organization and Vital Strategies to take action on noncommunicable diseases and injuries. PHC has supported Vancouver through funding and technical support to build a public-facing Healthy City Dashboard to engage communities in monitoring and responding to inequities and trends. In 2023 and 2024 the PHC has supported work with the Metro Vancouver Aboriginal Executive Council (MVAEC) to explore Urban Indigenous community-identified health indicators and a potential data governance model.

Alignment of the HCS with Council priorities

Current Council priorities, particularly the strategic objective of a Healthy, Inclusive, and Equitable City, are key drivers for social sustainability, and updating the HCS is an aligned Council-directed action. Council has endorsed and approved a number of strategies and actions which advance social sustainability in multiple ways, including these examples of recent social development-focused initiatives:

- *Transforming Attitudes, Embedding Change: Vancouver's Accessibility Strategy* (2022), which supports the full participation of persons with disabilities through inclusive services, programs, and infrastructure, and removing and preventing barriers.
- Investment and partnership with VCH to enhance mental health and substance use services (2022), addressing urgent gaps in safety and well-being.
- The *Housing Needs Report* (2022), and upcoming updates to the *Housing Vancouver Strategy*, to address housing affordability and availability.
- *Making Strides: Vancouver's Childcare Strategy* (2022), which focuses on equitable access to quality childcare to support the well-being of children and families.
- Youth Safety and Violence Prevention Strategy (2023), which takes a preventive, upstream approach to the well-being of youth in Vancouver.
- Participation as a pilot city in a UN-led quality of life initiative (2023) to measure urban quality of life in alignment with social development goals.

Individually, these initiatives contribute to advancing health, inclusion, and prosperity, and work toward a more socially sustainable city. Refreshing the HCS in 2024 will enable the City to

improve focus and coherence in social development work by prioritizing existing commitments, enabling Council to identify future goals, priorities, and targets, and improving outcome measures.

Discussion

Approach to refreshing the Healthy City Strategy

Based on the evaluation results and ongoing feedback between City staff, VCH staff, community partners, and networks, and the extensive work that was already done to begin development of a new implementation model in 2019, staff propose a focused and targeted approach to refreshing the HCS for a new term, rather than a complete overhaul.

The existing HCS framework has significant policy and data infrastructure already established, and building on these assets allows a more efficient and timely process and faster implementation of a refreshed strategy. Staff recommend that the key areas of focus for the refresh are: (1) HCS implementation and governance, to ensure clarity on roles and jurisdiction; (2) identify tools for collaborative action and clear accountabilities; (3) confirm this Council's social development priorities; and (4) provide alignment across departments and policies within the City of Vancouver.

Proposed engagement questions for the HCS refresh may include:

- How might we reinforce the HCS framework with core commitments to reconciliation, equity, and accessibility?
- How do we clarify City and partner roles, including the level of City effort within each goal area to set clear accountabilities that contribute to long-term population-scale outcomes?
- How might we align on the most pressing priorities for near-term action?
- How might we build clearer governance structures and support partners in all sectors for everyone to play a part through implementation?
- How might we scale up our monitoring and evaluation infrastructure to clearly demonstrate the links between actions and outcomes?
- How might we use the HCS as the City's overarching social sustainability framework to integrate and align strategic and policy work?

With these focused questions, staff propose a rapid and targeted approach to engaging community partners, and do not propose conducting broad public engagement. Key activities will include: engagement with Council; a notification to Host Nations and Urban Indigenous communities and an invitation for them to collaborate; continued close collaboration with VCH and across all City departments; re-involvement of community partners, particularly those who have been engaged in previous phases of the HCS; consultation with civic agencies and other existing advisory groups; and leveraging opportunities for data and indicators from the UN Quality of Life Initiative.

As part of mapping out the implementation of a recommended update to the HCS, staff would also seek Council direction on areas of social policy focus for the next 2-3 years.

Proposed timeline for the HCS refresh

If Council approves this approach in principle and directs staff to report back, work will begin immediately to plan the refresh process and identify key internal and external partners. Staff will continue to pursue partnership and resource opportunities that advance the goals of the HCS during the refresh process. Engagement and policy development will ramp up over summer and early fall 2024 with a report to Council with recommendations for a refreshed strategic framework in late 2024.

Financial Implications

No new funding is required to undertake the refresh of the HCS. The work will be supported by existing funded positions and external grants and awards, including the Partnership for Healthy Cities Award and contributions from Vancouver Coastal Health. As a strategic sustainability framework, the HCS is intended to clarify City roles in social policies, inform strategic priorities, and serve as a platform for advocacy and leveraging of external funding from senior governments and other sectors. The report back on the refreshed Strategy will not recommend major new investments to achieve the goals of the HCS, but will provide a framework for implementation that will be subject to regular budget processes.

Legal Implications

If adopted, Council will endorse the actions set out in the Recommendation.

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APPENDIX A

Timeline of selected Council decisions, recent work, and context for the HCS

- **1968:** Vancouver was one of the first municipalities in Canada to establish a Social Planning department, with a mandate to identify, analyze, and address social issues in the city and its neighbourhoods through better coordination, service provision, and infrastructure.
- **1986-present:** Responding to increasing urbanization, the World Health Organization develops and promotes the concept of a Healthy City, in which inequities in health are continually being reduced.
- **2001:** British Columbia's current regional health authority structure is created, with Vancouver Coastal Health incorporating the previous Vancouver Health Board.
- **2002:** Council <u>adopts</u> a definition and principles for sustainability, including economic, social, and ecological well-being.
- **2005:** Council <u>adopts</u> a definition of social sustainability that includes basic needs, individual/human capacity, and social/community capacity; and guiding principles of equity, social inclusion and interaction, security, and adaptability.
- **2008-present:** BC Public Health Act mandates Medical Health Officers to <u>advise</u> local governments on public health issues, and requires local governments to <u>provide</u> <u>information and consider advice</u> from health officers.
- **2010:** City and VCH collaborate on an <u>Urban Health Initiative</u> to prototype new ways of working together on acute health issues in Vancouver.
- **2014:** Council <u>adopts</u> current Healthy City Strategy vision, principles, goals, targets, and indicators.
- **2015:** All United Nations member states, including Canada, adopt the <u>Sustainable</u> <u>Development Goals</u> to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure everyone enjoys peace and prosperity worldwide.
- 2015: Council <u>approves</u> 2015-2018 Healthy City Action Plan.
- **2016-present:** BC <u>declares public health emergency</u> related to drug-related overdoses and deaths.
- 2019-present: Vancouver joins international Partnership for Healthy Cities.
- **2020:** Council <u>directs</u> staff to explore alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals as part of updating the Healthy City Strategy.
- 2020-2023: BC declares public health emergency during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **2021:** Vancouver launches <u>Healthy City Dashboard</u> to report on data and indicators.
- **2022-2024:** City works with Metro Vancouver Aboriginal Executive Council on Indigenous health data and indicators.
- 2023: Vancouver <u>recognized</u> with Partnership for Healthy Cities Award.
- 2023: Council sets strategic priorities, including updating the Healthy City Strategy.
- 2023: Council <u>approves</u> partnership with UN-Habitat to pilot quality of life indicators.

APPENDIX B Existing Healthy City Strategy Goals and Current State

This appendix provides a high-level synopsis of the existing HCS. The first column lists Councilapproved targets (2014) and actions (2015) within each goal area, while the second provides examples of achievements in each area. The final column highlights examples of current Council priorities and other decisions that are aligned with each goal.

A more detailed report on the 2015-2018 action plan was provided to Council in 2019. Further detail on a number of key indicators, including disaggregated data, trends, and commentary, can be found in the <u>Healthy City Dashboard</u>.

Existing goal	Existing approved targets and actions (2014-2018)	Recent initiatives (2019-present)	Aligned Council priorities (2022-2026)
A Good Start	 Reduce early childhood vulnerabilities Develop a good start policy framework to address well-being across childhood and youth Enable new childcare spaces 	 City continues to facilitate new childcare spaces; adopted Making Strides childcare strategy in 2022 Youth Safety Strategy adopted in 2023 	 Do our part to ensure we have sufficient childcare options for Vancouver families
A Home for Everyone	 End homelessness Enable supportive, social, and market rental housing units Implement priorities through Housing and Homelessness Strategy 	 Significant recent policy work: Housing Vancouver Strategy, Vancouver Plan, and Housing Needs Report Approval of new shelters and supportive housing units 	 Work with the Province and other partners to address the homelessness crisis Leverage City-owned property to add substantially more market and non- market housing Create the right regulatory framework and processes to support the efficient delivery of housing on private lands
Feeding Ourselves Well	 Increase food assets Implement priorities through Vancouver Food Strategy and Park Board Local Food Action Plan 	 Responded to food security challenges and supported organizations with space during pandemic 	Food mentioned in context of supporting diverse cultural communities and green economic sectors

Existing goal	Existing approved targets and actions (2014-2018)	Recent initiatives (2019-present)	Aligned Council priorities (2022-2026)
Healthy Human Services	 All Vancouverites have a family doctor Increase access to services Develop a social infrastructure plan Implement priorities in mental health and substance use 	 Response to ongoing public health emergency from toxic drug supply Grant to VCH to enable enhanced mental health and substance use services Spaces to Thrive Social Infrastructure Strategy adopted in 2021 	 Do our part to ensure Vancouver residents are physically and mentally healthy Provide programs and services to support local Indigenous Peoples Work with the Province and other partners to address the mental health and addiction crisis Ensure excellent Vancouver civic facilities
Making Ends Meet and Working Well	 Decrease poverty Increase median income Living Wage policy Social procurement framework and community benefit agreements Capacity-building for social entrepreneurship Advance poverty reduction strategies 	 Fair Wage policy based on averaging of living wage calculation Ongoing community economic development initiatives and implementation of Community Benefit Agreements Engagement on poverty reduction led to creation of Equity Framework and projects such as low- income transit pilot Creation of Business and Economy Office 	 Do our part to support local business and ensure the business climate is welcoming

Existing goal	Existing approved targets and actions (2014-2018)	Recent initiatives (2019-present)	Aligned Council priorities (2022-2026)
Being and Feeling Safe and Included	 Increase sense of safety and sense of belonging Reduce property and violent crime Staff training to engage with First Nations and Urban Indigenous communities Staff training on equity and effective service provision on gendered violence, newcomer settlement, sex work, mental health, substance use, and dementia 	 Anti-racism and cultural redress initiatives Uplifting Chinatown Action Plan Increased investment in policing Increased investments in Vancouver Fire Rescue Services Equity Framework and creation of Equity Office within City structure continues to build staff capacity, learning opportunities, and policy review Ongoing Social Policy grants to community organizations 	 Work to ensure Vancouver's cultural communities feel included and respected Support diverse cultural communities Revive Chinatown's vibrancy Reduce property and violent crime Invest in preventative safety and security programs
Cultivating Connections	 Ensure all Vancouverites have a social support network Increase local voter turnout Sharing City framework Examine and enable good relationships between residents Social connection initiatives 	 Efforts to build more community resilience and capacity to respond to environmental emergencies New position focused on coordination of policies and projects for older persons Ongoing support for research and interventions to support stronger social connections across the city 	• Ensure Vancouver is a seniors-friendly, accessible city
Active Living and Getting Outside	 □ Increase physical activity □ Ensure all Vancouverites live near a park or green space → Implement Park Board Strategic Framework 	 Ongoing implementation of VanPlay Strategy for parks and recreation, including prioritization of equity initiative zones 	 Deliver outstanding parks and recreation services

Existing goal	Existing approved targets and actions (2014-2018)	Recent initiatives (2019-present)	Aligned Council priorities (2022-2026)
Lifelong Learning	 Increase participation in lifelong learning Support pilot programs to increase access to learning opportunities 	 Ongoing delivery of programming and services through public library system Funding for inner city community and recreation centres and services 	 Make sure our libraries are dynamic social and learning hubs across the city
Expressing Ourselves	 Increase participation in arts and culture → Implement through Culture Plan 	 Ongoing City support to arts and culture sector through grants, spaces, public art, and programming Culture Shift Strategy guides overall City work in arts and culture 	 Provide support to the local film, television, music and digital entertainment industries Enable largescale sporting, cultural and arts events
Getting Around	 Increase walking, cycling, and transit mode share Continued implementation of Transportation 2040 Strategy Develop Active Transportation promotion and enabling plan 	 Implementation of sustainable transportation projects, including council direction to reallocate road space to prioritize active transportation and public transit Ongoing active transportation initiatives and annual reporting on metrics 	 Enhance the safety of our transportation network Reduce Vancouver's GHG emissions from transportation in line with overall Climate Emergency Action Plan goals
Environments to Thrive In	 Ensure all Vancouver neighbourhoods are walkable Increase biodiversity and reduce toxins Active living design guidelines Stronger walking connections in community plans Public spaces throughout the city 	 Direction in Metro Vancouver Regional Growth Strategy, Climate Emergency Plan, and Vancouver Plan to develop complete communities across the city Climate Emergency Action Plan and Vancouver Plan goals to create walkable neighbourhoods Public spaces created during pandemic and continue through Council priorities 	 Make sure we conserve fresh water and our local waters are healthy and clean Create vibrant public spaces Provide support to green economy sectors

Existing goal	Existing approved targets and actions (2014-2018)	Recent initiatives (2019-present)	Aligned Council priorities (2022-2026)
Collaborative Leadership	 Collaboratively implement actions to advance the goals of the Healthy City Strategy Innovation lab for collaborative implementation and integration of sustainability goals 	 Healthy City Dashboard provides public reporting on indicators and outcomes Efforts to incorporate an Indigenous perspective into the HCS through partnerships and policy engagement Implementation of Accessibility Strategy Solutions Lab and other opportunities for interdepartmental collaboration have advanced work on equity in granting, age-friendly policy, climate and food policy, data equity, and other topics 	 Advance the City of Vancouver United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) Task Force recommended actions Responsible financial management