

COUNCIL REPORT

TO: CITY MANAGER **DATE:** 2019 June 05

FROM: DIRECTOR CORPORATE SERVICES **FILE:** 16000 20
DIRECTOR PARKS, RECREATION AND *Reference:* Homelessness Response
CULTURAL SERVICES
DIRECTOR PLANNING AND BUILDING
DIRECTOR PUBLIC SAFETY AND
COMMUNITY SERVICES

SUBJECT: BURNABY'S HOMELESSNESS RESPONSE

PURPOSE: To provide information on the City's improved homelessness response, including the establishment of a temporary homeless shelter in Burnaby and an update on closure of three of the City's warming centres.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. **THAT** Council receive this report for information.

REPORT**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

On 2018 November 26, Council passed a motion directing staff to immediately pursue activities to improve the response to homelessness in Burnaby for the 2018-2019 winter season. These activities included specific actions to facilitate the opening of multiple warming centres and pursue a partnership with BC Housing to open a temporary homeless shelter in Burnaby. This report provides information on the City's response to homelessness, including a summary of the warming centre operations, and the work undertaken to establish a temporary shelter in Burnaby.

2.0 POLICY CONTEXT

The City of Burnaby has a deep commitment to improving the quality of life for all its residents, and the City's policies recognize that an important component of this is facilitating the development of a comprehensive continuum of housing, including emergency housing. The Official Community Plan sets the City's direction for affordable and special needs housing. Its policies direct the City to seek new methods, regulation and partnerships to encourage the development of affordable and special needs housing, in collaboration with the Federal and Provincial governments.

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This direction was formalized in 2014 with the adoption of the Regional Context Statement which outlines the City's commitment to the policy direction of working with senior levels of government towards meeting the housing needs across the housing continuum. The Social Sustainability Strategy, adopted in 2011, guides the City to seek opportunities to work with senior levels of government, businesses, and community organizations to facilitate the development of housing that is supportive of, suitable to, and affordable for, specific target groups, including those experiencing or at-risk of homelessness.

This report also aligns with the following goals and sub-goals of the Corporate Strategic Plan:

- A Connected Community
 - Partnership – Work collaboratively with businesses, educational institutions, associations, other communities and governments
- An Inclusive Community
 - Serve a diverse community – Ensure City services fully meet the needs of our dynamic community
 - Create a sense of community – Provide opportunities that encourage and welcome all community members and create a sense of belonging

3.0 CITY OF BURNABY'S HOMELESSNESS RESPONSE

In 2018 November, Council directed staff to take immediate action to improve the City's response to homelessness in Burnaby. Several initiatives, described below in the order in which they were begun, are contributing to this improved response.

3.1 Supportive Housing

On 2018 February 11, Burnaby Council adopted bylaw amendments to permit the construction of a supportive housing facility on City-owned land for persons experiencing homelessness. The City received a proposal for the development from BC Housing as part of the province's Rapid Response to Homelessness Initiative. Through this initiative, BC Housing partners with local governments and non-profit housing operators to build low-cost housing with a range of supports for individuals in need.

The facility will be comprised of 52 studio units in a three-storey building with shared amenity space, support services and staffed 24 hours per day, 7 days a week. The facility will be operated by Progressive Housing Society, a well-established Burnaby non-profit organization. The facility will be constructed at 3986 Norland Avenue and is anticipated to start being tenanted this summer.

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3.2 Warming Centres

In response to Council's 2018 November 26 motion, the City quickly opened four warming centres in 2018 December at Swangard Stadium, Kensington Pitch and Putt, Beresford Civic Operations Centre, and South Central Youth Centre. The centres were intended to provide a safe and welcoming space to adults that required a warm and dry place to stay for a short period of time or overnight during the months of December to March. The City operated centres were open seven nights per week from 8:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m., except the centre located at South Central Youth Centre which was open 11:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. to accommodate existing youth programming. Packaged snacks, warm beverages and water were available to people utilizing the centres, as well as chairs and mats for sitting down or sleeping during centre operations. The City partnered with Progressive Housing Society to enable Outreach staff to attend the centres once per week. This facilitated connections to Progressive Housing's services for centre users.

With the return of warmer weather, three of the four centres closed at the end of 2019 March. The City will continue operations at the Beresford centre until further notice to provide continuity of services until such time as other homelessness initiatives are operational. Attendance at the warming centres grew over the course of the winter months. There were a total of 2,575 visits to the centres over 109 nights between 2018 December 12 and 2019 March 31. The majority of those visits were at Swangard Stadium (1,020). Peak attendance for all centres in one night was 43 people. Since the closures of the three other centres, the Beresford Centre has seen a peak attendance of 29 visits in one night and accommodates an average of 21 persons per night.

Two debrief sessions were conducted with warming centre staff, and staff from other departments within the City that had a role in supporting the operation. Feedback at the sessions was generally positive, and several suggestions were received which will be used to improve the operation during the next opening season. As the winter of 2019 approaches, staff will be reviewing the operating procedures according to the feedback received. Operations of the warming centres will be considered within the context of the new housing facilities coming online this summer. Council will be notified of any changes to the proposed warming centre locations and opening hours, as well as any other significant operating changes that need to be approved in the months before opening for the 2019-20 winter season.

3.3 Temporary Shelter

Another response to Council's motion to improve Burnaby's homelessness response is work undertaken to establish a temporary shelter in Burnaby. Temporary shelters provide emergency accommodation and meals, and serve as a point of connection to services, for people experiencing homelessness. Temporary shelters, as opposed to permanent purpose-built shelters, are typically located within existing buildings and operate for a defined period of time, either seasonally or longer. These facilities can become operational in a shorter period of time

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compared to permanent purpose-built emergency shelters. Details of the establishment of a temporary shelter are described in section 4.0 of this report.

4.0 PROGRESS ON ESTABLISHMENT OF A TEMPORARY SHELTER

In British Columbia, the provincial government has implemented a funding program, Emergency Shelter Program for Temporary Shelters, through BC Housing to undertake partnerships with municipalities and non-profit operators to open temporary shelters across BC. Under the partnership, the City's role is to deliver an appropriate site for a temporary shelter, including but not limited to obtaining the necessary City approvals and covering capital and lease costs for the shelter. BC Housing's role is to be the leaseholder for the site, select a non-profit service provider to operate the shelter, undertake public engagement, fund the shelter's operations and provide additional support and resources, as required by the service provider. The non-profit operator's role is to operate the shelter, assist with connections to community support services and ongoing community engagement.

4.1 Temporary Shelter – Partners

The City has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with BC Housing which outlines the partnership structure, funding sources, operations and role of each party. The MOU identifies the specific roles/contributions of the parties involved, which include the following:

City's role:

- locate and renovate a building/site to accommodate a temporary shelter with up to 40 shelter beds;
- fund and complete the necessary capital improvements to convert the building/site to a temporary shelter use; and,
- fund the lease costs for the shelter site.

BC Housing's role:

- be the leaseholder for the facility site;
- undertake and lead public engagement process;
- provide the necessary funding to operate a temporary shelter with up to 40 shelter beds and associated support services and costs (e.g. staffing, day-to-day operations, supplies) for up to three years, based on the need for this service in the city; and,
- provide support services and resources to the shelter operator (Progressive Housing Society), as needed.

Progressive Housing Society's role:

- operate the temporary shelter year-round on a 24 hour/7 day a week basis under an operating agreement with BC Housing;
- connect occupants with other support services (i.e. health, social, housing and counselling services); and,
- community outreach on an ongoing, as needed basis.

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The facility location at 2294 Douglas Road has been secured for a three year lease plus one year option, with the property owner.

4.2 Temporary Shelter Site – 2294 Douglas Road

At its meeting on 2019 April 29, Council adopted a text amendment to the Zoning Bylaw to permit temporary shelters in a number of residential, commercial and industrial zoning districts in Burnaby. Staff undertook an extensive search of potential locations for a temporary shelter. The site at 2294 Douglas Road was available and suitable for use as a temporary shelter as it met the operational requirements of BC Housing and Progressive Housing Society, as well as many of the City's locational considerations for these types of facilities.

The subject site, which is located at the northeast corner of Douglas Road and Springer Avenue, is within the Brentwood Town Centre. While the site is located in a predominantly industrial area, it is an area transitioning from industrial to multiple-family residential uses. The site is within walking distance of both the Holdom and Brentwood SkyTrain stations, and is along a bus transit route. It is also proximate to other community services and amenities that would benefit shelter residents. The subject site is improved with a 6,255 sq. ft. one-storey warehouse building with accessory offices (1,295 sq. ft.). It is designated for high density mixed use and is intended to be redeveloped in the future.

The subject site is of a sufficient size and condition to accommodate a temporary shelter use. A number of tenant improvements are required for the space to be used safely as a temporary shelter, as detailed below in Section 4.3 of this report.

4.3 Tenant Improvements

In consultation with BC Housing and Progressive Housing Society, a number of improvements are required to ensure that the building at 2294 Douglas Road is suitable for a temporary shelter use. In general these improvements will include the installation of the following:

- additional washrooms;
- shower facilities;
- improved fire exiting;
- construction of women's dorm room;
- kitchen servery facilities; and,
- a laundry room.

Building Permit and Preliminary Plan Approval (PPA) applications are in process and a contract has been awarded for the completion of construction work. Preparations to outfit the shelter with beds and other furnishings are also underway. Construction activity has begun to prepare for an anticipated opening this summer.

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4.4 Temporary Shelter Operations

The temporary shelter would operate as a high support shelter for very vulnerable people who are experiencing homelessness, particularly those who are street homeless. Key features of the temporary shelter will include:

- operation on a 24 hours per day, seven days a week basis;
- accommodation of a maximum of 40 beds;
- supervision provided by a minimum of two staff at all times;
- staff trained in overdose prevention best practices;
- provision of secure storage for personal belongings;
- pet friendly;
- provision of two meals per day to those staying at the shelter;
- ability of residents to keep their same beds until they no longer require them;
- provision of housing outreach and other support services; and,
- referrals to other community support services for those who are ineligible or otherwise cannot be accommodated by the operator.

5.0 COMMUNICATIONS

BC Housing will take the lead in developing and implementing the communications and community engagement plans for the temporary shelter. The City will support BC Housing's communication activities as appropriate.

Key components of the proposed Communications Plan would include:

- **Neighbourhood notification:** BC Housing has sent an information letter to property owners and residents in the surrounding area, including an invitation to participate in community dialogue meetings.
- **Community Dialogues:** BC Housing will lead facilitated community dialogues as a means of engaging the community prior to the facility opening.
- **Community Advisory Committee:** As part of its ongoing community engagement during the temporary shelter operations, Progressive Housing Society with support from BC Housing will establish a Community Advisory Committee (CAC) to support the success of integrating the temporary shelter into the community. The CAC will consist of representatives from Progressive Housing Society, BC Housing, the City of Burnaby, the RCMP, other relevant government agencies, and community members and businesses from the neighbourhood surrounding the temporary shelter. The purpose of the CAC is to build relationships between the community, the operator and program partners; to facilitate information sharing and dialogue among CAC members; and identify and resolve any issues, opportunities and concerns related to the shelter operations. An application process to become a community member of the CAC is being developed and member selection will occur prior to the shelter opening.


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6.0 CONCLUSION


This report outlines the key initiatives of the City's improved response to homelessness and work undertaken to establish a temporary shelter in Burnaby. The coming months will see the opening of two new facilities dedicated to providing emergency and supportive accommodations for people experiencing homelessness in Burnaby. The advancement of these facilities is consistent with Council's direction and the City's adopted policies for creating inclusive communities and facilitating development throughout the housing continuum. After the opening of the Norland supportive housing development and the temporary shelter, staff will undertake a comprehensive review of the City's homelessness response to date to prepare for the coming winter season. The purpose of the review will be to develop a strategic and collaborative approach to planning future actions to address homelessness in Burnaby. Further reports regarding the City's homelessness response will be submitted to Council, as required.



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