
TO: CITY MANAGER **DATE:** 2020 June 30

FROM: DIRECTOR PLANNING AND BUILDING **FILE:** 16000 20
Reference: Homelessness

**SUBJECT: CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED FROM THE BURNABY
COMMUNITY ACTION TEAM ON THE OVERDOSE CRISIS**

PURPOSE: To respond to correspondence from the Burnaby Community Action Team regarding the City's response to homelessness during the COVID 19 pandemic and beyond.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **THAT** Council receive this report for information; and,
2. **THAT** this report be sent to the Burnaby Community Action Team and the signatories of its correspondence.

REPORT

1.0 INTRODUCTION

At the Council meeting on 2020 May 25, correspondence was received from the Burnaby Community Action Team on the Overdose Crisis (BCAT). The BCAT is a community table comprised of Burnaby non-profit organizations, various provincial ministries, City of Burnaby staff, Burnaby School District staff, provincial and federal elected officials, and the Fraser Health Authority. The BCAT was established with funding from the Provincial Government to collaborate on targeted local strategies in response to the current overdose health crisis. In its letter, the BCAT requested that the City provide warming centre staff access to naloxone and other overdose response supplies and training, and to expand facilities for the homeless population during the COVID 19 pandemic. This report responds to BCAT's requests.

2.0 POLICY SECTION

The proposed approach is supported by the following City-wide policies:

The Official Community Plan

- Residential Goals

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- Goal 4: To help ensure that the needs of people with special and affordable housing requirements are met.
- Social Planning Goal
 - To facilitate the development and ongoing sustainability of a community which enhances the physical, social, psychological and cultural well-being of Burnaby residents.

The Social Sustainability Strategy

- Strategic Priority 1 – Meeting Basic Needs: Look for opportunities to work with senior levels of government, businesses, Fraser Health, community organizations and others to facilitate the development of housing that is supportive of, suitable and affordable to specific target groups such as low and moderate income households, others experiencing mental health, addictions, family violence, homelessness and other challenges.

The Economic Development Strategy

- G1: Building a Strong, Livable, Healthy Community – Look for opportunities to work with the Provincial and Federal governments to make programs and resources available for affordable housing projects
- S11: Social Integration, Not-for-Profit – Continue to use the City’s authority to assist in increasing the range and quantity of affordable housing and suitability for all (including the community’s most vulnerable)

Further to the above, the proposed approach also aligns with the following goals and sub-goals of the *Corporate Strategic Plan*:

- ***A Safe Community***
 - Crime prevention and reduction – Ensure citizens and businesses feel safe in our community
 - Emergency preparedness – Enhance plans, procedures and services so that we are better prepared to respond to emergencies and are able to maintain City services
 - Community amenity safety – Maintain a high level of safety in City buildings and facilities for the public and City staff
- ***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
- ***A Healthy Community***
 - Healthy life – Encourages opportunities for healthy living and well-being

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- **A Thriving Organization**

- Organizational culture – Ensure that our core values are reflected in our policies, programs and service delivery
- Financial viability – Maintain a financially sustainable City for the provision, renewal and enhancement of City services, facilities and assets
- Human resources – Foster an environment for teamwork, efficiency and excellence to deliver customer service in alignment with our core values
- Communication – Practice open and transparent communication among staff, Council and the community

3.0 BACKGROUND

Addressing homelessness has been a Council priority since 2018 November 26 when Council passed a motion authorizing staff to undertake work to improve the City’s response to homelessness. This response included working with BC Housing to open a temporary, 24 hour a day, 40-bed emergency shelter. Council also directed staff to open and operate several warming centres to provide temporary, overnight shelter during the coldest months of the year as an interim service until the temporary shelter was opened. Additionally, the City was already working with BC Housing on the development and opening of 52 units of supportive housing, on Norland Avenue (“Norland Place”).

The City’s four warming centres were operational in 2018 December 12. The warming centre service continued until the temporary shelter opened on 2019 August 19. The Norland Place supportive housing development started moving in tenants soon after. Immediately upon opening, the temporary shelter and supportive housing developments were operating at full capacity. Because of this, the warming centres were reopened for the 2019/2020 winter season. Originally operations were scheduled from 2019 November 15 to 2020 March 31. However, in mid-March, the Provincial government declared the COVID 19 pandemic health emergency and the City adjusted the warming centre operations to address the new situation.

In response to the COVID 19 pandemic, the City proceeded with closing two smaller warming centres at Swangard Stadium and Kensington Pitch and Putt as scheduled on 2020 March 31 as these spaces could not accommodate the new requirements for physical distancing. Following the pandemic announcement, demand for the warming centre service also increased. To address this, the City opened a new larger warming centre at the then closed Burnaby Lake/Bill Copeland Sports Complex that could accommodate a larger number of patrons while providing appropriate spacing to help reduce the potential for virus transmission. The Beresford warming centre also remained open during this time. Now that the Provincial Health Officer has announced the Province’s entry into Phase 2 of the COVID 19 pandemic and various public facilities are able to reopen to the public, the warming centres were slated to close on 2020 May 31; however, the facility at Burnaby Lake remained operational until 2020 June 30.

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4.0 BURNABY COMMUNITY ACTION TEAM ON OVERDOSE CRISIS

On 2016 April 14, the Provincial government declared a state of emergency throughout British Columbia related to the overdose crisis. At the end of 2017, the Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions launched an Overdose Emergency Response Centre; a provincial hub for regional and community action teams dedicated to addressing the overdose crisis. The goal of the Centre is to lead urgent action at the community level to prevent further overdose deaths and to support people using substances and struggling with addiction through access to supports, treatment and recovery services where appropriate. The Burnaby Community Action Team (BCAT) was formed in 2018 with provincial funding and is made up of community stakeholders, including people with lived experience.

The Terms of Reference for the BCAT states that the purpose of the group is to bring together multiple stakeholders to support and facilitate local partnerships, coordinate programs and services, address gaps, and plan for collaborative community action around the overdose crisis. Its' work is guided by the Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions' core set of interventions.

5.0 HOMELESSNESS PLANNING

At its meeting on 2019 November 18, Council authorized staff to commence work to prepare a Housing Needs Report (HNR). A HNR provides a summary of the City's housing stock and determines existing and anticipated housing needs. This analysis will include the assessment of the needs of people experiencing or at-risk of homelessness in Burnaby. As part of this work, in the coming months, the City will be consulting with housing and homelessness stakeholders, including community organizations that work with people experiencing or at-risk of homelessness and those with lived experience to better understand the housing needs of this population. The HNR will in turn inform the development of a Housing and Homelessness Strategy, which will detail goals, strategies and actions that the City will undertake to address the housing needs of the community and support pathways out of homelessness. Additional consultation with community stakeholders will be integral to the development of the Housing and Homelessness Strategy. Future operations of the warming centres will be assessed as part of this analysis.

Staff are currently developing engagement activities for both the HNR and the Housing and Homelessness Strategy. Engagement with stakeholders is anticipated to begin in 2020 July and be ongoing during the summer months. The outcomes of the stakeholder engagement are to inform the longer term objectives of the Housing and Homelessness Strategy. However, staff will work with stakeholders to identify shorter-term actions of all parties to support the homeless response for the upcoming winter season, including assessing the operations of the warming centres.

As a longer term solution, staff are also investigating opportunities for the development of additional supportive housing units in Burnaby. Supportive housing units, like those at Norland Place, would provide permanent homes for people previously experiencing homelessness. Tenants in these supportive housing units would pay rent at the income assistance shelter rate for a self-contained studio unit. Meals, medical supports and other support services would be available to

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tenants of these buildings. It is anticipated that further actions for the City to consider will be identified through the stakeholder engagement activities for the upcoming Housing Needs Report and the Housing and Homelessness Strategy.

In the interim, the City is working in partnership with BC Housing to try to address the near term needs for those experiencing homelessness during the COVID 19 pandemic. The City continues to assist BC Housing in the establishment of an Emergency Response Centre (ERC) in Burnaby. An ERC provides temporary supportive space and access to hygiene facilities for people who do not have homes so they can stay indoors in a safe environment during the COVID 19 pandemic. ERCs are part of a collective effort to try to prevent the spread of the virus and mitigate demand on the healthcare system. ERCs have been established in several municipalities in British Columbia, including Vancouver, New Westminster, Surrey, Richmond, Nanaimo, Vernon and Victoria. ERCs are funded by BC Housing and they contract a homeless serving non-profit organization to operate the facility. They are staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and provide meals and cleaning services. Additionally, medical supports would be provided to those staying there. Appearing elsewhere on tonight's Council agenda is a report seeking approval to enter into a lease agreement with BC Housing for an ERC at Burnaby Lake East parking lot.

In response to the pandemic, BC Housing has also secured 30 hotel rooms for people without homes. To address physical distancing constraints at the full Douglas Shelter, a number of people from the shelter have been temporarily relocated to these hotel rooms. The remaining hotel rooms are being used for medical referrals from the hospital, Douglas shelter and the warming centres for people who test positive for COVID 19 or who have other contagious illnesses such as the flu and do not otherwise have somewhere safe to self-isolate. These rooms are supported by Progressive Housing Society staff who provide regular check-ins and meals. Medical support is also being provided by Fraser Health's Home Health.

6.0 PROVISION OF NALOXONE OVERDOSE RESPONSE SUPPLIES AND TRAINING TO WARMING CENTRE STAFF

As noted earlier in this report, Council approved the establishment of warming centres in 2018 December. The core purpose of these centres is to provide a temporary respite for homeless people during the onset of colder weather in winter. Snacks and hot beverages are provided. The code of conduct and operating procedures for the warming centres have been developed to allow vulnerable people access to a quiet, warm place to sleep and get basic sustenance. However, in spite of the fact that the code of conduct does not allow drug use within the warming centres, the debilitating effects of mental health and addiction issues among many of these vulnerable people can mean that drug overdoses occasionally occur at the warming centres. Operating procedures in place at the centres provide that in the event of an overdose, staff are trained to immediately call medically trained first responders to administer the proper treatment. In each of the overdose cases that have occurred at Burnaby's warming centres, the patrons have recovered. However, it has been suggested in correspondence received from BCAT that in addition to the operating procedures currently in place, Burnaby staff at the warming centres be issued with naloxone overdose response supplies and training. Before the City can make a recommendation, staff would have to evaluate

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the operational implications of the request, and would have to determine the advisability and feasibility of the request in order to evaluate whether or not this would be an effective additional measure to prevent overdoses in this context. It is appropriate that staff do this advisability and feasibility analysis when they undertake the annual operating procedure review in September prior to re-opening the centres in early winter, should such direction be given to staff.

7.0 CONCLUSION

This report responds to correspondence received from the Burnaby Community Action Team on the Overdose Crisis requesting that the City expand facilities for those experiencing homelessness and that naloxone overdose supplies and training be provided to warming centre staff. The Burnaby Lake warming centre continued to operate until 2020 June 30, while staff continue to assist BC Housing with its search for a site for an Emergency Response Centre for the remainder of the pandemic. Over the coming months, the City will be engaging stakeholders for housing and homelessness to determine the City's housing needs, including those specific to people experiencing homelessness, and develop near and long term strategies and actions on homelessness. Additionally, staff will undertake the advisability and feasibility regarding provision of naloxone overdose prevention supplies and training as part of its annual review of warming centre operations in preparation for the 2020/2021 winter season, should staff be so directed.



E.W. Kozak, Director
PLANNING AND BUILDING

CS:sa

cc: Director Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services
Director Public Safety and Community Services
Director Corporate Services
Chief Licence Inspector
City Clerk