

# City of New Westminster Homelessness Action Strategy

*Equitable Engagement and a  
Shared Path Forward*

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# WHO WE ARE

Our team would like to acknowledge our positionality. Our team members are uninvited guests on the unceded, stolen, and traditional territories of the Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh (Squamish) Səl̓ílwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) and x̣ṃəθḳẉəỵəm (Musqueam) peoples whose lands we work, live, and play on.

Further, we are acting as exterior consultants who are not residents of New Westminster, which means that we lack location-specific knowledge and a connection to the community.

While none of us have lived experience with homelessness, we recognize that our privilege can prevent us from understanding the everyday challenges and needs of precariously housed people in New Westminster, create misconceptions, and hinder us from having a fuller understanding of the dimensions of poverty. Due to this, throughout the project, our team needed to continuously practice cultural humility and approached the project from a place of learning.



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Within the decade since the City of New Westminster completed its previous *Homelessness Action Strategy* in 2006, new challenges have emerged that have led to an increase in homelessness in the city. These challenges include:

- The housing affordability crisis;
- An opioid overdose crisis;
- Extreme weather events; and,
- A global pandemic.

As a result, homelessness is one of the most pressing issues facing municipalities, and New Westminster is no exception.

Following direction from City Council, the City began the process of creating a new *2022 Homelessness Action Strategy* [The Strategy] in partnership with our team, from the University of British Columbia's School of Community and Regional Planning (SCARP), the Homelessness Coalition Society, and the Community Action Network (CAN) Leadership Training Program Graduates (Appendix A).

A comprehensive literature review of homeless data, promising and emerging practices, and theoretical frameworks informed our process and the engagement to follow.

Despite some project limitations, we pivoted our approach and successfully held a series of engagement events to reach a diversity of individuals in New Westminster. These engagement events consisted of:

- Homelessness Action Week
- Working Group
- Focussed Discussions with Business and Resident Interests
- Community Conversations Event
- Key Informant Interviews

*The draft Strategy provides a vision, policy framework, and five-year action plan for addressing homelessness in New Westminster in an appropriate, coordinated, and purposeful manner*

The Strategy outlines action items and an implementation plan that aim to meet the diverse needs of the homeless population, ensuring that facilities, programs, and services are responsive, and that barriers to access are eliminated or significantly reduced.

With input and guidance from CAN Leaders and the Homelessness Working Group, the following preliminary action categories emerged:

- Coordination and Implementation
- Shelter, Housing, and Tenant Support
- Income, Employment, and Financial Literacy
- Services and Support
  - Information and Resources
  - Health and Hygiene Services
  - Outreach, Referral, and Advocacy Services
- Communication, Engagement, and Involvement

Our team looks forward to finalizing the Strategy and presenting to City Council in the coming months.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	<b>04</b>
<b>01 Introduction</b> .....	<b>06</b>
Timeline .....	07
<b>02 Literature Review</b> .....	<b>08</b>
Trends in Homelessness .....	08
Demographic Profile of Homelessness .....	09
Equity-Seeking Communities .....	09
Promising and Emerging Practices .....	10
Theoretical Frameworks .....	12
<b>03 Approach</b> .....	<b>08</b>
Engagement Framework .....	15
Engagement Process .....	15
Analytical Strategy .....	21
<b>04 What We Heard</b> .....	<b>22</b>
Coordination and Implementation .....	22
Shelter, Housing, and Tenant Support .....	22
Income, Employment, and Financial Literacy .....	23
Services and Support .....	23
Communication, Engagement, and Involvement .....	24
<b>05 Reflection</b> .....	<b>25</b>
Project Limitations .....	25
Suggestions for Future Work .....	26
<b>06 Conclusion</b> .....	<b>27</b>
<b>References</b> .....	<b>28</b>
<b>Appendices</b> .....	<b>31</b>



Image 1. A pond near City Hall in New Westminster.

# 01 INTRODUCTION

*The purpose of this project is to develop a Homelessness Action Strategy in partnership with the City of New Westminster, the Homelessness Coalition Society, and the Community Action Network (CAN) Leadership Training Program Graduates.*

The City of New Westminster, located on the traditional territory of the Coast Salish peoples and the Qayqayt First Nation, has been facing a rise in homelessness which has been aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic. On September 13, 2021, City Council directed staff to begin work on a strategy that would provide a vision and plan for addressing homelessness and related issues for the next five years.

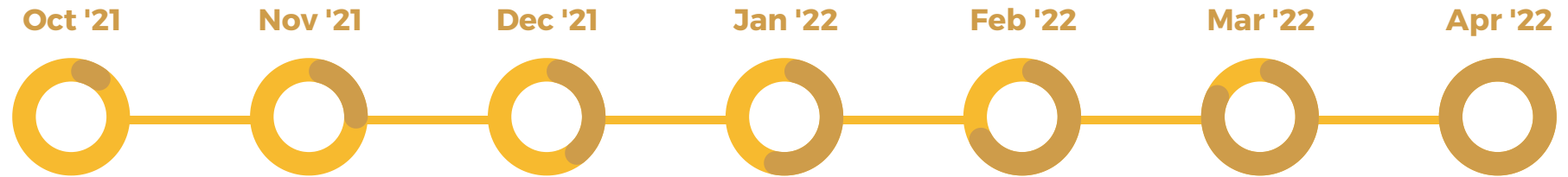
Our team (Appendix B) partnered with the City of New Westminster, the Homelessness Coalition Society, and the Community Action Network (CAN) Leadership Training Program Graduates to develop the Strategy. This report explores the process of developing the Strategy, and presents a draft of the recommended actions and implementation plan.

This project sought to accomplish five objectives, which are further detailed in Appendix C.

The objectives are as follows:

- 1 Gather information on and apply promising and emerging practices, theoretical frameworks, and data on homelessness in New Westminster;
- 2 Engage and consult with business and resident interests, individuals with lived and living experience of homelessness, community members, and service providers;
- 3 Participate in the Homelessness Action Strategy Working Group;
- 4 Identify short, medium, and long-term action items; and
- 5 Co-create the Homelessness Action Strategy.

# 1.1 Timeline



**Project Scoping & Information Gathering**  
Initial review of homeless situation and response, promising and emerging practices, and survey results from Homelessness Action Week.

**Engagement Planning & Facilitation**  
Drafted and finalized engagement strategy and organized and facilitated the following engagement activities: Working Group, focussed discussions with businesses and resident associations, key informant interviews with faith-based and non-profit service providers, and a community conversation and survey.

- DELIVERABLES**
- Project Proposal
  - Promising & Emerging Practices Research
  - Engagement Plan
  - Interim Report & Presentation
  - Working Group Agenda and Script
  - Engagement Notes
  - Engagement Summaries
  - Qualitative Analysis of Community Survey
  - Draft Homelessness Action Strategy
  - Final Report & Presentation

**Analysis & Synthesis**  
Iterative analysis of engagement data with the guidance of City staff. Data was synthesized into findings that informed the recommended actions with input and guidance from the Working Group and CAN Leaders.

**Finalize & Present**  
Deliverables were drafted and finalized, and the project was presented.

## 02 LITERATURE REVIEW

This section introduces the background information that guided our approach to this project. Our team reviewed City of New Westminster documents pertaining to housing precarity and homelessness, homeless count data, promising and emerging practices in homeless intervention, and theoretical frameworks.

**The goals of this review were to identify:**

- **Demographic trends** in homelessness data;
- **Gaps in service provision** for individuals experiencing homelessness.
- **Promising and emerging practices** in homelessness prevention and response; and
- **Appropriate methods of public engagement** with vulnerable populations, particularly individuals with lived and living experience of homelessness;
- **Theoretical frameworks** to guide the engagement, actions, and implementation plan.

### 2.1 Trends in Homelessness

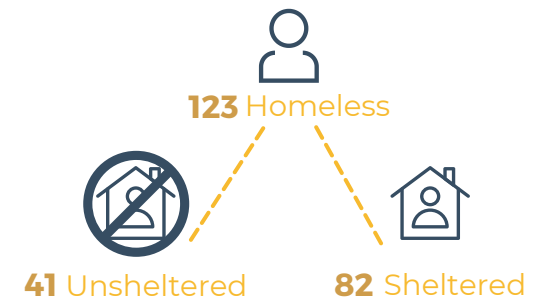
Between 2002 and 2008, the unsheltered homeless population in New Westminster **increased by 118%**, signalling the need for the City of New Westminster to create its first *Homelessness Needs Assessment* and *Homelessness Action Strategy* in 2006.

One product of this process was the establishment of the Homelessness Coalition Society in 2006. Indicators of the strategy's success were observed in subsequent years. Between 2008 and 2017, **the unsheltered homeless population decreased by 58%** (See Appendix D for a definition of this term).

Further, through the incorporation of the Homelessness Coalition Society in 2012, there was improved coordination and provision of services, and several action plans were developed to guide their activities over the next five-to-seven year period. Most notably, new supportive housing and the establishment of a New Westminster Rent Bank to prevent homelessness ameliorated the severity of

homelessness in New Westminster (City of New Westminster: Homelessness Information Bulletin - Appendix E).

The *2020 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count* enumerated 123 total individuals experiencing homelessness, 41 of whom were unsheltered, and 82 of whom were sheltered. Like other counts, it is assumed that this is an undercount (See Appendix D for a definition of these terms).



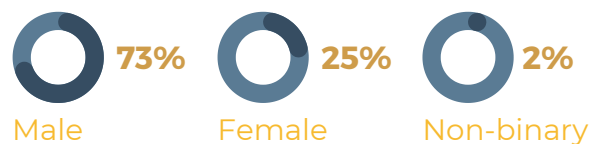
While there was an 8 percent reduction in individuals experiencing homelessness between 2017 and 2020, the unsheltered homeless population increased by 11 individuals (BC Non-Profit Housing Association, 2020).



Based on the most recent homeless count in 2020, unsheltered homelessness is on the rise. Between 2017 and 2020, there was a 37% increase, and there is evidence that the COVID-19 pandemic, the housing affordability crisis, the opioid overdose crisis, and extreme weather events have further increased homelessness into 2021. Like all homeless counts, this is likely a significant undercount of the true extent of homelessness in New Westminster (City of New Westminster: Homelessness Information Bulletin - Appendix E).

## 2.2 Demographic Profile of Homelessness

The 2020 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count does not break down all demographic data by community. For this reason, this report assumes that the data for the region are roughly applicable to New Westminster. The count found that just under three-quarter's of respondents (73 percent) identified as male, while one-quarter (25 percent) identified as female, and the remaining 2 percent identified as non-binary.



The majority of respondents in New Westminster are adults between the ages of 25 and 54, followed by seniors (55 years or over) and youth (under 25 years).

79%  
25-54 years old



Just over one-third of respondents (69 percent) identified as non-Indigenous (BC Non-Profit Housing Association, 2020)



69%  
Non-Indigenous

## 2.3 Equity-Seeking Communities

The 2020 New Westminster Homelessness Needs Assessment, which is still in draft form and has not yet been published, tells the story of homelessness in New Westminster by paying particular attention to voices and experiences that are underrepresented in homeless data. For the purposes of this report, we have referred to these individuals as being part of an equity-seeking community. For a definition of this term, please see Appendix D.

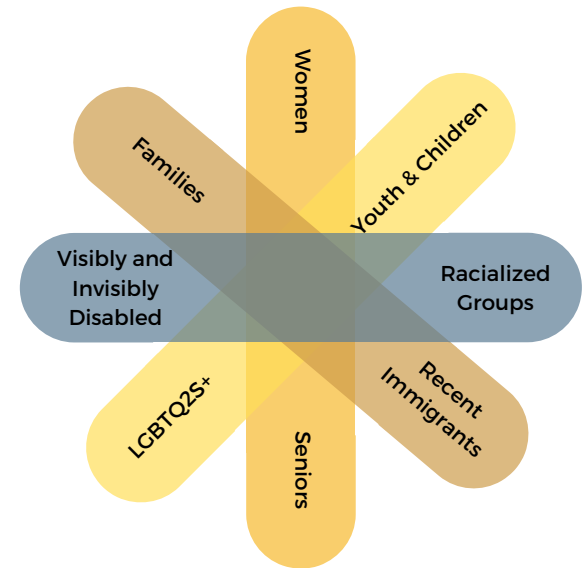


Figure 1. Equity-seeking groups identified in the draft 2020 Homelessness Needs Assessment.

### Indigenous Community

Indigenous people are overrepresented among those experiencing homelessness when compared to their presence in the general population. Just under one-third (31 percent) of 2020 Homeless Count respondents in New Westminster identified as Indigenous. Of the 22 Indigenous respondents, 12 were unsheltered and 10 were sheltered (BC Non-Profit Housing Association, 2020). Further, Indigenous homelessness is often defined differently than homelessness (Appendix D).

### Racialized Communities

Other racialized minority groups were also overrepresented among those experiencing homelessness in Metro Vancouver. These include (BC Non-Profit Housing Association, 2020):

- Black;
- Latin American;
- Arab; and
- Others.

### Gender Identity and Sexuality

While men make up the majority of those experiencing homelessness in point-in-time counts, women experiencing homelessness face unique challenges. Women are more likely to seek out temporary stays or couch surf, making them a part of the **hidden homeless** population (See Appendix D for definition of this term). This means that women are often missed during counts, therefore the true extent of their homelessness is unknown.

Further, while individuals that identify as 2SLGBTQIA+ make up **4 percent** of Canada's population, **11 percent** of homeless respondents identified as 2SLGBTQIA+ across Metro Vancouver (BC Non-Profit Housing Association, 2020). This indicates that this population is overrepresented in homeless data.

### Summary

Given the over- and under-representation of these demographic markers, the draft *Homelessness Needs Assessment* posited that individuals in equity-seeking communities were being missed in the data, therefore services and supports could not adequately respond to their unique needs.

It is important to recognize that this data was collected prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and does not account for the associated increase in the homeless population nor the impacts on services. As a result, it was crucial that we accounted for these changes and impacts in the *Homelessness Action Strategy* in order to adequately address new and emerging gaps and needs.

## 2.4 Promising and Emerging Practices

A review of plans and strategies addressing homelessness and housing precarity was conducted to learn about promising and emerging practices. We limited our search to North American municipalities and documents published in the past ten years. We were particularly interested in reviewing **three (3) outputs** guided by the following questions:

### Engagement Strategy

- What are some of the innovative approaches?
- What are some of the conventional approaches?
- How do municipalities define "meaningful engagement"?

### Action Items

- How do municipalities translate what they had heard in engagement into actionable items?
- Are there action items that we could explore further?

### Implementation Plan

- How do municipalities implement action items?
- Are there any innovative implementation methods?

Ten (10) municipalities across North America were reviewed following input and recommendations from City staff and the Working Group members.

A more detailed overview of the promising and emerging practices review can be found in Appendix F. Here, two municipalities in British Columbia are highlighted for having particularly innovative practices.

## Reaching Home

 Kamloops, BC

 2019 - 2024

 Strong partnerships

 Limited engagement

The City of Kamloops' *Reaching Home Strategy* was informed by a survey advertised to individuals with an interest in solving homelessness. The survey received responses from community members and representatives from organizations serving various populations (e.g. youth, Indigenous people, women, families, people with disabilities, people with lived and living experience of homelessness, etc). In addition to the survey, other individuals were engaged in an open dialogue, including representatives from local Indigenous organizations. In total, 96 community members were engaged.

Most prominently, the City of Kamloops partnered with organizations to provide community-specific interventions to solve homelessness. Funding from the Federal Government's Reaching Home Program, in addition to municipal funding, was critical for this Strategy. In particular, the Strategy assigned funding

- Housing Services
- Prevention and Shelter Diversion
- Support Services.

### Unique Features

- The city funds non-profits to provide services and housing to the homeless with the support of federal funding.
- A community working group evaluates new projects on a case by case basis in accordance with the Homeless Community Plan.

## HOME

 Burnaby, BC

 2021 - 2031

 Strongest tenant protections

 Reactive, not proactive

The City of Burnaby's *HOME Housing and Homelessness Strategy*, the first of its kind in the municipality, engaged a diversity of community members. Reaching a total of **2,600 community members** over the course of three years, the Strategy was expedited and received municipal priority due to the political will and interest of local government.

In 2019, Burnaby convened the Mayor's Task Force on Community Housing and gathered thousands of comments through the Your Voice, Your Home public engagement process. The result was a set of:

- 18 recommendations, and;
- 10 "quick start" ideas to guide the City's housing efforts.

With this guidance, Burnaby has since implemented a comprehensive Rental Use Zoning Policy and bolstered its Tenant Assistance Policy with the strongest protections in Canada.

### Unique Features

- Responds to a context in which homelessness and housing had been previously overlooked within the municipality.
- Put in place the strongest tenant protections and assistance policies in Canada.
- Establishes quick start action items in response to the extensive feedback on gaps and solutions for the City to begin working on.

## 2.5 Theoretical Frameworks

The promising and emerging practices research revealed three primary theoretical frameworks that we used to inform the engagement plan and the framing of proposed action items. In particular, frameworks that sought to conceptualize and/or provide solutions to homelessness were explored. Further, we searched for a compassionate engagement method that would centre the voices and respond to traumatic events of individuals with lived and living experience of homelessness. The following three frameworks were crucial in informing this project:

### 2.5.1 Housing First

### 2.5.2 Trauma-Informed Care

Deep Listening

### 2.5.3 Systems Change

### 2.5.1 HOUSING FIRST

*Housing First policies prioritizes providing permanent housing solutions to people experiencing homelessness.*

#### Framework Description

Early policies to address homelessness in Canada failed to address the intersections of (Mental Health Commission of Canada & The Homeless Hub, 2014):

- Mental health;
- Addictions; and,
- Homelessness.

The housing choices for those living with such vulnerabilities were often sparse. Due to this, the streets were seen as one of the only viable options for survival. Thus, **Housing First (HF)** as a policy approach to homelessness and a systemic solution to the cycle of homelessness was a worthwhile solution in that it provided an array of housing choices to clients. There is a strong emphasis on adapting the policy to fit the needs of local communities to serve other

intersections of identity such as:

- Youth;
- Seniors;
- Women; and,
- Families.

HF centres on moving those experiencing homelessness into stable housing as the first step towards transitioning individuals out of the cycle of poverty and homelessness. HF recognizes that homelessness is traumatic, therefore it sees housing as a crucial first step in healing and encouraging individuals to access other services and supports (e.g. mental health and addiction services) (Canadian Homelessness Research Network & The Homeless Hub, 2013).

#### Framework Application

Throughout the engagement, we flagged:

- Proposed housing interventions (e.g. temporary modular housing, permanent housing solutions),
- Funding avenues,
- Servicing gaps, and
- Potential partnerships

to inform the action and implementation plan in the *Homelessness Action Strategy*.

## 2.5.2 Trauma-Informed Care

*Trauma-informed care seeks to respond to the impacts of trauma in all its forms, while avoiding retraumatization and supporting resiliency.*

### Framework Description

Those experiencing homelessness face chronic stress related to the precarity of shelter and food, and the lack of financial resources and social supports to change one's circumstances. Put simply, homelessness is traumatic. **Trauma-informed care (TIC)** seeks to understand, anticipate, and respond to trauma in any form (Hopper et al., 2010). Trauma-informed approaches “are policies and practices that recognize the connections between violence, trauma, negative health outcomes and behaviours. These approaches increase safety, control and resilience for people who are seeking services in relation to experiences of violence and/or have a history of experiencing violence” (Government of Canada, n.d.).

According to Government of Canada (n.d.), trauma-informed approaches are based on the **key policy and practice principles:**

1. Understand **trauma** and **violence**, and their impacts on peoples' lives and behaviours
2. Create emotionally and physically **safe** environments
3. Foster opportunities for **choice**, **collaboration**, and **connection**
4. Provide a **strengths-based** and **capacity-building** approach to support client **coping** and **resilience**

### Framework Application

This approach informed our engagement with individuals with lived and living experience of homelessness, and guided the Strategy's action and implementation plan. The purpose of TIC was to minimize harm and re-traumatization of individuals with lived and living experience of homelessness during our engagements as much as possible.

To this end, **Deep Listening (DL)** was identified as a method by CAN Leaders for engaging in a safe and informal setting in lieu of formulaic engagement methods (e.g. focus groups, interviews, etc). Unfortunately, due to COVID-19 restrictions, we were unable to use DL. Instead, we worked with service providers and CAN Leaders to conduct interviews.



## DEEP LISTENING

**Deep Listening (DL)** is a dialogic engagement method that centres the voice and experiences of the speaker and encourages listeners to behave with humility and suspend judgement. In particular, it sees everyone as learners who are exploring and making sense of each other's experiences (Elers et al., 2021). This allows misconceptions and misinformation to be challenged.

Homelessness is a vulnerable position to occupy, and many individuals live at the intersections of other vulnerabilities and identities. DL would have allowed us to create a safe and comfortable environment to share one's experiences, dispel misconceptions, and mitigate re-traumatization.

Unfortunately, the COVID-19 public health requirements in January 2022 prevented us from conducting this engagement. All proposed variations were beyond the capacity of service providers and potential participants. While deep listening would have been ideal, we adapted quickly to fill this gap in engagement.

## 2.5.3 Systems Change

*Systems Change addresses causes, instead of symptoms, of an issue by taking a holistic and systemic approach resulting in a greater impact.*

### Framework Description

**Systems Change (SC)** is an approach to understanding and resolving chronic, complex problems. Specifically, SC seeks to:

- **Illuminate interdependencies** between elements that create and exacerbate a problem; and
- **Identify solutions** that target the system and not just its parts.

When viewed through this lens, homelessness can be seen as having various causes and solutions. For example, increasing the supply of temporary housing will not solve homelessness. Instead, we need to see services and policy measures as connected in order to identify gaps and solutions (Fowler et al., 2019). Alberta is known for using systems thinking to solve homelessness. In particular, Alberta leveraged a change formula which proposes that, in order to effect and sustain

change, **three components** are required:

- **Dissatisfaction with the current state:** understanding the current context and why change is needed now
- **Vision for the future:** envisioning and embracing a preferred future
- **A clear path forward:** defining the approach for moving forward

These steps help to reduce resistance to change, and allowed Alberta to make significant progress in reducing homelessness (Morissette, 2016).

### Framework Application

Our team used SC thinking as a way to understand the cycle of housing instability. In particular, during the engagements with individuals with lived and living experience, we took note of proposed gaps and solutions that were cross-jurisdictional. Further, SC allowed us to suggest the coordination of actions and funding among service providers and senior levels of government in the proposed actions. This approach was valuable in understanding the vicious cycle of poverty and its connection with food security, mental health and illness, drug misuse, domestic violence, gender and race, and others. Through this, we dug into the different structures and interconnections that keep people in poverty.



Figure 2.  
Homelessness as part of a system.

# 03 APPROACH

## 3.1 Engagement Framework

The **Engagement Strategy** (Appendix G) aimed to uncover the gaps in our knowledge from the literature review and the draft 2021 *Homelessness Needs Assessment*. The goal of the engagement was to identify gaps and needs and brainstorm innovative solutions and approaches to tackling homelessness. The Engagement Strategy identified people with lived and living experience of homelessness, non-profit and faith-based service providers, senior government ministries, local law enforcement, businesses and residents associations, Fraser Health Authority, and the general public as individuals who would be impacted by this Strategy, and therefore needed to be engaged.

## 3.2 Engagement Process

A description of these engagement events is detailed below. In particular, there is focus on the rationale for these events and the preliminary findings.



### 3.2.1 Homelessness Action Week Engagement Design

The first engagement event, hosted in October, was held during **Homelessness Action Week**. This annual event raises awareness and provides resources related to homelessness. Booths were set up by City staff at Hyack Square and the Holy Trinity Cathedral with the goal of sharing resources with individuals experiencing homelessness and distributing a survey with a series of open-ended questions.



Image 2. The booth at Holy Trinity Cathedral.

City staff, CAN Leaders, and our team were all present. Our team helped to conduct surveys, direct visitors to resources, and distribute care packages containing various essentials. The surveys were concerned with learning about what respondents did and did not like about New Westminster, how they would like their voices to be heard, and which resources and services are important and which are missing.

## Engagement Results

A total of 31 surveys were completed and submitted. This feedback provided a glimpse into experiences of homelessness in New Westminster, and informed both the literature review research and the rest of the engagement. It was found that:



Respondents enjoyed New Westminster for its people, parks, and the atmosphere.



Respondents disliked New Westminster for the abundance of drug misuse, lack of toilet facilities, feeling judged by other people, and poor public garbage disposal.



Services that are most important to respondents include the food hubs, social supports and non-profit service providers, and shelters.



Respondents are discouraged from accessing services due to the geographic dispersal of services, harassment and discrimination from other people, and inaccessibility of transit.



Lastly, respondents said that affordable and accessible housing and transportation and the allocation of better social supports would make their lives easier.

## 3.2.2 Working Group

### Engagement Design

A **Working Group** comprised of faith-based and non-profit service providers, local law enforcement, business and resident associations, Fraser Health Authority, and others (Appendix H) was formed at the beginning of this project. The purpose of the Working Group was to solicit feedback and encourage discussion on the engagement activities, discuss the needs and barriers to providing services to the people they serve, and propose policy recommendations and actions. In particular, there was an emphasis on ideating action items that were responsive to the unique and diverse needs of homeless individuals, and eliminate or significantly reduce barriers to access. The Working Group met for a duration of an hour and a half on Zoom, once a month for a total of five (5) meetings. The meetings varied in format, but generally consisted of presentations by City staff and our team, facilitated small group discussions, and opportunities to ask questions.

### Engagement Results

The Working Group meetings were useful for crowdsourcing information on gaps, needs, and proposed solutions related to

homelessness. In particular, the Working Group helped to refine the Engagement Strategy and the proposed actions. Copious notes were taken by City staff and our team during these meetings which were used to inform various aspects of the Strategy. Some of the recurring feedback we received during these meetings, which was crucial in informing our work, is summarized below:

Gaps & Needs	Proposed Solutions
Need for safe inhalation sites for users	Advocate to Fraser Health Authority for supervised inhalation sites
Need to increase secure and supportive housing	Social Benefit Zoning
Need for an up-to-date resource hub for service providers	Develop and maintain resource documents with up-to-date information and contact details



Gaps & Needs	Proposed Solutions
Need for an education and resource hub for community members to be educated on the homelessness situation in New Westminster	Develop a homelessness awareness campaign to reduce stigma surrounding homelessness
Lack of front-line service capacity around the clock, especially during the evening and on weekends	Expand the current service and response hours, ideally to 24/7
Need to work with property-owners to incentivize low-income rentals	Develop programs to incentivize property-owners to rent to low-income individuals (i.e., subsidies or tax incentives)
Accommodation and resources for homeless pet-owners are lacking	Partner with the New Westminster Humane Society to shelter pets while the owner stays in a shelter or enters a treatment facility
Lack of storage facilities at service providers for ones' belongings	Partner with faith-based and non-profit service providers to increase storage facilities
Need access to on-demand drug treatment	Partner with the Fraser Health Authority to create an on-demand drug treatment with a flexible intake process

### 3.2.3 Focussed Discussions with Business and Resident Interests

#### Engagement Design

It was found that businesses and residents had been impacted by homelessness but had limited opportunities to share their concerns or be part of the solution. Often, their interactions were adversarial, and they did not understand municipal limitations related to enforcement, or proposed City actions to address their concerns. Some business and resident interests wanted to know what they could do to make a difference in their neighbourhoods, and ensure that programs and services were responsive to their needs too (e.g., hours of operation, litter collection, etc).

As a result, two **focussed discussions** were hosted, one with business associations and the other with residents' associations. The purpose of this engagement was to ensure that the Strategy was responsive to the needs of businesses and residents and included actions that identified ways they could be a part of the solution. The discussions were facilitated by our team, with City staff in attendance to provide support (See Appendix I for a list of questions).

## Engagement Results

In accordance with other engagement events, the focussed discussions were concerned with identifying gaps and needs in homelessness response, and proposing potential solutions from the perspective of businesses and residents in New Westminster (See Appendix J for findings). The primary feedback is summarized below:

Gaps & Needs	Proposed Solutions
Concerns about public safety and not knowing who to call other than 911	Ensure that businesses and residents, particularly the associations, are well-acquainted with services and supports
Business and residents want to help with advocacy work but do not know how to get involved	Inform businesses and residents on how they can contribute to homelessness solutions

Concerns about the increasing presence of human waste in public spaces	Increase public toilets around New Westminster
Need to fight misconceptions and stigmatization on homelessness in New Westminster	Include BIAs and RAs in communication materials to correct misinformation and preconceptions on homelessness and associated issues (i.e. mental health, drug addiction, etc)

### 3.2.4 Community Conversations

#### Engagement Design

Based on the *City's Budget 2022* survey, one-third (30%) of respondents identified homelessness and just under one-half (43%) of respondents identified housing affordability as some of the most important issues in New Westminster (City of New Westminster, 2021b). These numbers hint at the importance and urgency of these issues and the need for action in addressing them. To

ensure that community members had an opportunity to share gaps and needs in homelessness response and propose potential solutions for inclusion in the Strategy, an engagement event was crucial.

In February of 2021, a panel discussion and Q&A session titled “**Community Conversations**” was hosted virtually. The event garnered the attendance of over 60 community members. The panel was made up of representatives from the City, non-profit service providers, and individuals with lived and living experience of homelessness.

Scan this code to watch the Community Conversations event



The event was used to launch a community survey on the City's Be Heard webpage to identify resident concerns or issues, potential opportunities, and proposed actions for addressing homelessness. The survey provided an opportunity for participation and feedback for those who were not part of the other engagement sessions.

## Engagement Results

The survey was submitted by **341 community members**. Three-quarter's (75 percent) of respondents identified as residential property owners in New Westminster, while just under one-quarter (24 percent) identified as a residential tenant.

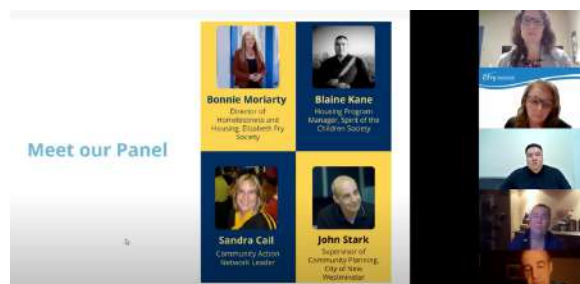


Image 3. The Community Conversations event.

Of the issues they **most wanted to see addressed**, respondents selected the following:

### Issues to Address

- 36%** Mental health and substance use
- 22%** Homeless encampments and squatting
- 18%** Feeling or being unsafe
- 11%** Presence of human waste

When asked to select **potential actions** that would best address their concerns, respondents indicated the following:

### Potential Actions

- 52%** Increase access to mental health supports
- 37%** Develop more affordable housing
- 35%** Increase enforcement
- 32%** Develop additional emergency shelter capacity
- 28%** Increase access to substance use services, including on demand

In response to a question that asked what respondents could do that would have the **most impact** in addressing homelessness, they indicated the following:

### What You Can Do To Make an Impact

- 40%** Advocate for additional supports
- 39%** Make a donation to an organization addressing homelessness
- 38%** Help reduce stigma and misinformation by having conversations with your family members and friends
- 33%** Volunteer your time at a homelessness program or service

Finally, in response to a question of whether or not the respondent or a family member had **experienced homelessness or been at extreme risk of homelessness**, just under two-thirds (60%) of respondents indicated that they had not, while one-third (33%) indicated that they had.



## 3.2.5 Key Informant Interviews

### Engagement Design

**Key informant interviews** were conducted to supplement the other engagement events, particularly when deep listening engagement was no longer possible due to COVID-19 health regulations.

Further, homeless counts under-report the true extent of homelessness, and this is particularly the case for certain groups and populations. The intention of these key informant interviews was to fill data gaps identified in the draft 2021 *Homelessness Needs Assessment*, particularly for equity-seeking groups. These specific groups and populations are discussed in section **2.3 Equity-Seeking Communities**.

Our team conducted **eight (8) key informant interviews** between January and March 2022. One (1) interview was held with an individual with lived experience of homelessness, and the remaining seven (7) interviews were conducted with service provider representatives. The interviews focused on identifying gaps and needs and solutions for addressing homelessness in New Westminster.

The interviews were between 30 and 75 minutes in duration and sought to answer eight (8) questions (see Appendix K for the script). Participants who identified as someone with lived and living experience with homelessness were compensated for sharing their time and knowledge with us. CAN Leaders expressed interest in facilitating engagement and played an integral role in conducting interviews with individuals with lived and living experiences of homelessness. Please note that these interviews are not summarized in this report.

### Engagement Results

Copious notes were taken during the interviews. Following the interviews our team reviewed the notes and scanned for preliminary themes. These themes evolved, and were eventually summarized and shared with City staff (see Appendix L for full list of findings).

Gaps & Needs	Proposed Solutions
<p><b>Increase in sheltered and unsheltered homelessness</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacity reductions due to COVID-19</li> <li>• Rise in domestic abuse</li> <li>• Unaffordable shelter costs</li> <li>• Services are underfunded</li> <li>• Staffing shortages at service providers</li> <li>• A lack of storage facilities</li> <li>• Increase in mental health emergencies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase emergency shelter and supportive housing capacities</li> <li>• Explore aging in place for seniors at-risk-of or experiencing homelessness</li> <li>• Additional income and rental assistance</li> <li>• Storage facilities</li> <li>• Additional mental health supports</li> </ul>
<p><b>Concern of increasing substance use</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lengthy waitlists, particularly for addiction recovery programs</li> <li>• Mounting opioid overdose crisis</li> </ul>	<p>Increase harm reduction sites, particularly to allow for drug inhalation</p>
<p><b>Increase in stigmatization of homelessness</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand education and awareness campaigns</li> <li>• Replicate the I's on the Street Program</li> </ul>
<p><b>A lack of coordination among service providers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A lack of information and resources</li> <li>• A lack of translation and multicultural supports</li> <li>• A lack of integrated and collaborative response among service providers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A hub for individuals experiencing homelessness</li> <li>• Clearly delineate roles of City and service providers in administering services and supports</li> <li>• Fund a coordinator position to coordinate services</li> </ul>

### 3.3 Analytical Strategy

Our team and City staff took copious and detailed notes at every engagement event. We reviewed and summarized the notes shortly after each event. Each summary was a point form assessment of the various gaps and solutions identified between the various community groups. This was an iterative process that sought to uncover the primary feedback we were hearing. These summaries were posted to the Homelessness Action Strategy page on the City of New Westminster's Be Heard platform for the public to view.

#### Refining Recommendations

It was important for us to centre the voices of individuals with lived and living experience in the Strategy. Rather than just consulting them, we wanted them to be involved in reviewing the responses from the engagement events and to collaborate with our team and City staff to create appropriate and responsive action items and an implementation plan. On March 23, 2022, our team gathered with City staff and the CAN Leaders at City Hall to workshop the preliminary proposed actions (see Appendix M for the meeting agenda). At the workshop, the proposed actions were printed on large sheets of paper and divided



Image 4. A group discussing the proposed actions.

between two rooms. Participants were split into two groups, and switched between the rooms to discuss the actions. The facilitators read through the actions, and participants were encouraged to discuss them, pose questions, give feedback, and take notes on Post-It notes. In particular, the discussions focused on what was missing from the list of proposed actions and how the proposed actions could be improved to accurately meet the needs of individuals living with homelessness. These comments and suggestions were then summarized following the event (Appendix N). While there was a wide variety of feedback, there were some that stood out as being particularly impactful:

#### Comments and Feedback

- The Rent Bank program application process is **inaccessible and invasive**.
- There is a need for supportive **life skills training** to support individuals in the transition to more independent housing is needed.
- **Storytelling** is a powerful tool in reducing stigma associated with homelessness.
- Food programs should be **culturally-appropriate, nutritious, and empowering**. People should be able to make food **choices** for themselves.
- The City and service providers should use **plain and accessible language** wherever possible, and work to translate important documents.
- There is a need to explore **supported employment and training programs** through partnerships with service providers and businesses.
- Individuals with lived and living experience of homelessness should be better **engaged and updated on policies** and other initiatives that impact them.
- There is a need for a **community-based liaison person** who can bridge the gap between clients, service providers, and the City.
- There is a desire for **CAN Leaders to continue to be involved** in the implementation and monitoring of the Strategy.

## 04 WHAT WE HEARD

This section outlines **proposed actions** based on the engagement and research conducted to date. Throughout this process, approximately 40 actions emerged. In April 2022, the final Working Group meeting will occur, where members will conduct a final review of the draft Strategy, including the proposed actions. As such, these actions are in draft form pending approval from Working Group members and City staff. The proposed actions are organized into the following categories:

### 4.1 Coordination and Implementation

### 4.2 Shelter, Housing, and Tenant Support

### 4.3 Income, Employment, and Financial Literacy

### 4.4 Services and Support

### 4.5 Communication, Engagement, and Involvement

### 4.1 Coordination and Implementation

- That the City and Homelessness Coalition Society take primary responsibility for the implementation of the *Homelessness Action Strategy*.
- That the City and Homelessness Coalition Society engage people with lived and living experience of homelessness in the implementation of the Strategy.

### 4.2 Shelter, Housing, and Tenant Support

Shelter and housing can provide pathways out of homelessness, and if longer-term and paired with appropriate supports, can assist in addressing underlying issues which contribute to homelessness. The City is working with the senior levels of government to realize 358 supportive housing units and 2,083 non-market housing units between 2021 and 2031.

- That the City continue to advance “social benefit” zoning, such that social benefit land uses are permitted “as of right,” either across the city, in certain

geographic areas, or within specific zones, and that it include lands leased or owned by faith-based and non-profit organizations.

- That the City advocate that BC Housing continue to fund existing extreme weather and emergency shelter beds and that it monitor and respond to the need for such beds, including related to specific population groups of the unsheltered.
- That the City advocate that BC Housing work to ensure that extreme weather and emergency shelter sites provide for the following needs, which have been identified as barriers to access:
  - ability to accommodate couples while maintaining safety for all guests;
  - ability to accommodate pets, either on-site or through a contractual arrangement with the New Westminster Animal Shelter;
  - adequate storage to accommodate personal belongings, including larger items such as buggies or carts;
  - fully accessible to accommodate guests with health, mobility or physical limitations.
- That BC Housing expand provision of transition and second stage housing for

women and children fleeing abusive situations.

- That the City advocate that the Ministry of Children and Family Development fund a Youth Safe House in New Westminster.
- That the City, in partnership with the Tenant Resource and Advisory Centre, hold tenant education and information sessions, which deal with legal protections and rights, and address the needs of specific population groups such as newcomers, persons with disabilities, and seniors.
- That the City continue to fund the administrative costs of the New Westminster Rent Bank Program.
- That the City and Purpose Society advocate for continued senior government funding for the New West Rent Bank Program in order to enhance access to and eligibility for loans, and to ensure that the amounts provided reflect the true cost of rents.

### 4.3 Income, Employment, and Financial Literacy

Lack of income, and low-paying employment, including casual and part-time, are contributing factors to homelessness. Adequate income and employment, including supportive, combined with financial literacy and lifeskills training, can assist individuals in exiting homelessness and remaining housed.

- That the City advocate that the Province increase Income Assistance and Disability rates to better reflect the true cost of living, including for shelter, and that it advocate for expanded eligibility and amounts related to rent subsidy programs.
- That the City and Homelessness Coalition Society realize sustainable funding for the “I’s on the Street” micro-street cleaning program, and that it explore related initiatives that engage the unsheltered, provide supported employment opportunities, and address business and resident concerns related to homelessness and other social issues.
- That the Community Poverty Reduction Committee and the Homelessness Coalition Society work with mainstream financial institutions to develop and/or promote financial literacy programming and short-term, low-interest loan products.

### 4.4 Services and Supports

Services and support can prevent individuals from falling into homelessness, enhance quality of life while homeless, and assist in existing homelessness. They can also address business and resident impacts associated with homelessness and related issues.

#### Information and Resources

- That the City advocate that the Province fund a 24/7 drop-in and resource centre in the Downtown, which would provide access to emergency food, information and referral, and laundry, shower, and toilet facilities.
- That the City continue to prepare and update the Financial Supports Bulletin, Food Resources Calendar and Survival Guide, and that it explore new ways to communicate this information, including through community notice boards and QR codes.
- That the City provide access to a free phone line at City Hall, and that it continue to partner with Douglas College and Purpose Society on digital inclusion initiatives, including the distribution of smart phones, enhanced access to Wi-Fi, installation of charging stations, and provision of training.

## Health and Hygiene Services

- That the City expand availability of toilet facilities for the unsheltered, including through enhanced access to civic facilities, partnerships with faith-based and non-profit organizations, and provision of free-standing, pre-fabricated toilets.
- That the City advocate that Fraser Health fund expanded hours (i.e., from 7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.) for the Health Contact Centre, which provides witnessed consumption and other harm reduction services.
- That the City advocate that Fraser Health fund an inhalation site as part of the Health Contact Centre, or at another site in conjunction with the Centre.
- That the City, through Fire and Rescue Services, and with funding support from Fraser Health, partner with a non-profit organization on an Opioid Response Pilot Project, which would provide follow-up, support and referral after an overdose event.
- That the City advocate that Fraser Health fund evening hours (i.e., from 4:30 p.m. to 10:00 or 11:00 p.m.) for the recently formed Integrated Response Team, which is supporting the sheltered and unsheltered with mental health issues.

- That the City advocate that Fraser Health fund evening hours (i.e., from 4:30 p.m. to 10:00 or 11:00 p.m.) for the recently formed Integrated Response Team, which is supporting the sheltered and unsheltered with mental health issues.

## Outreach, Referral, and Advocacy Services

- That the City, through Police or Integrated Services, create a Vulnerable Persons Liaison Officer Team who would work in conjunction with non-profit outreach workers to address homelessness and other social issues.
- That the City advocate for additional senior government funding to augment homeless outreach, referral and advocacy services, and that the services be tailored to address the specific needs of different population groups of the unsheltered, including related to newcomers, seniors, women, and youth.

## 4.4 Communication, Engagement, and Involvement

Businesses and residents are calling for enhanced communication related to

homelessness, including City actions to address it, and have indicated an interest in learning about opportunities to learn more about and make a difference in responding to this issue.

- That the City, through Economic Development and Community Planning, regularly update businesses and residents about efforts to address homelessness and other social issues, and that it provide a forum, possibly through ‘Be Heard New West,’ for feedback.
- That the City develop and staff an after-hours non-emergency line where businesses and residents can share and receive a response to their concerns, including possible follow-up action if deemed appropriate.
- That the Homelessness Coalition Society develop a “how to make a difference” brochure in which businesses and residents can address homelessness (e.g., advocating for additional support and services, making a donation, raising awareness about the issue, volunteering at a program, etc.).
- That the New Westminster Chamber of Commerce develop a new category under its Platinum Awards to publicly recognize businesses that are making a difference in addressing homelessness and other social issues.



## 05 REFLECTION

### 5.1 Project Limitations

Throughout the project we faced a variety of expected and unexpected limitations. In this section, we outline these and identify how we tried to address them.

#### 5.1.1 COVID-19 Pandemic Impacts

It was anticipated that the COVID-19 pandemic would be a limitation throughout the project, especially the community engagement. Our team planned to abide by the ever-changing physical and social distancing requirements, and ensure the timeline was flexible in order to adapt.

In December of 2021, the omicron variant spread and stricter measures were enforced. In consultation with City staff, the remaining engagement events were to be hosted virtually.

It was acknowledged that virtual engagement is exclusionary, particularly for individuals with unequal access to the internet or who lack digital literacy. In spite of that, the physical health of participants was of the utmost importance.

The deep listening engagement with individuals with lived and living experience of homelessness were cancelled. Instead, additional key informant interviews were conducted to fill that gap. While these interviews were helpful in informing the Strategy, we failed to include the diversity of inputs we had identified at the outset.

#### 5.1.2 Technological Limitations and Accessibility

A barrier we faced during the engagement was unequal access to technology. The pandemic necessitated a rethinking of our methods, which relied disproportionately on access to both internet and technological devices (e.g. computer, tablet, smartphone).

While there are programs in place that seek to expand access to these tools, our timeline could not accommodate this pivot. As a result, we were unable to meaningfully engage with individuals who could not be present virtually.

This limitation created the unwanted consequence of reproducing systems of oppression that impact equity-seeking groups. Instead, we empowered voices from individuals and organizations that were already well-connected and powerful (e.g. business and resident interests). To mitigate the impacts of this limitation, we have recommended that the CAN Leaders and other individuals with lived and living experience of homelessness be involved in implementing, monitoring, and reporting on the progress of the Strategy.



Image 5. Some of the CAN Leaders collaborating with our team and City staff.

## 5.2 Suggestions for Future Work

In light of the project limitations, we have outlined a suggestion for future work to further mitigate the impacts of our limitations.

### 5.2.1 Expanding the Engagement Plan

While the City of New Westminster's residents come from a variety of backgrounds and experiences, there were limitations in reaching potential participants of intersectional identities due to our timeline.

Further, we found it difficult to find service providers in New Westminster that could share their networks with us. In the future, we suggest that an alternative engagement plan be created that features a list of organizations across Metro Vancouver that serve equity-seeking communities.

While these communities may be outside the jurisdiction of the City, their experiences are valuable nonetheless. This list of organizations could be contacted in the event that the City is having difficulty recruiting participants through their local networks. This alternative

plan would ensure that equity-seeking communities are still meaningfully engaged and represented in City policies and initiatives.



Image 6. Pier Park in New Westminster.

## 06 CONCLUSION

Over the past eight months, our team has worked in partnership with the City of New Westminster, the Homelessness Coalition Society, and the Community Action Network (CAN) Leadership Training Program Graduates to develop a draft *Homelessness Action Strategy*. In particular, we co-created a vision, policy framework, and five-year action plan for addressing homelessness in New Westminster.

The Strategy outlines action items and an implementation plan that aim to meet the diverse needs of the homeless population, ensuring that facilities, programs, and services are responsive, and that barriers to access are eliminated or significantly reduced.

A comprehensive literature review of homeless data, promising and emerging practices, and theoretical frameworks was critical in informing the Strategy and subsequent community engagement.

Despite limitations associated with COVID-19 health regulations and technological accessibility, we held a series of engagement events to reach a variety of groups in New Westminster. These engagement events consisted of:

- **Homelessness Action Week** booths to share resources, distribute care packages, and conduct a survey
- A **Working Group** that met monthly to identify gaps and needs and brainstorm potential solutions
- **Focused Discussions with Business and Resident Interests** to learn about gaps and needs from their perspective, and brainstorm ways they could get involved in homelessness initiatives
- A **Community Conversations** event, with an associated survey to hear from the broader community
- **Key Informant Interviews** with representatives from service provider and an individual with lived experience of homelessness

With the guidance and knowledge of the Working Group, CAN Leaders, and City staff, the literature review research and engagement were transformed into a list of proposed actions and a draft *Homelessness Action Strategy*. While the Strategy is still in draft form, we look forward to finalizing it and presenting it to Council in the coming months.

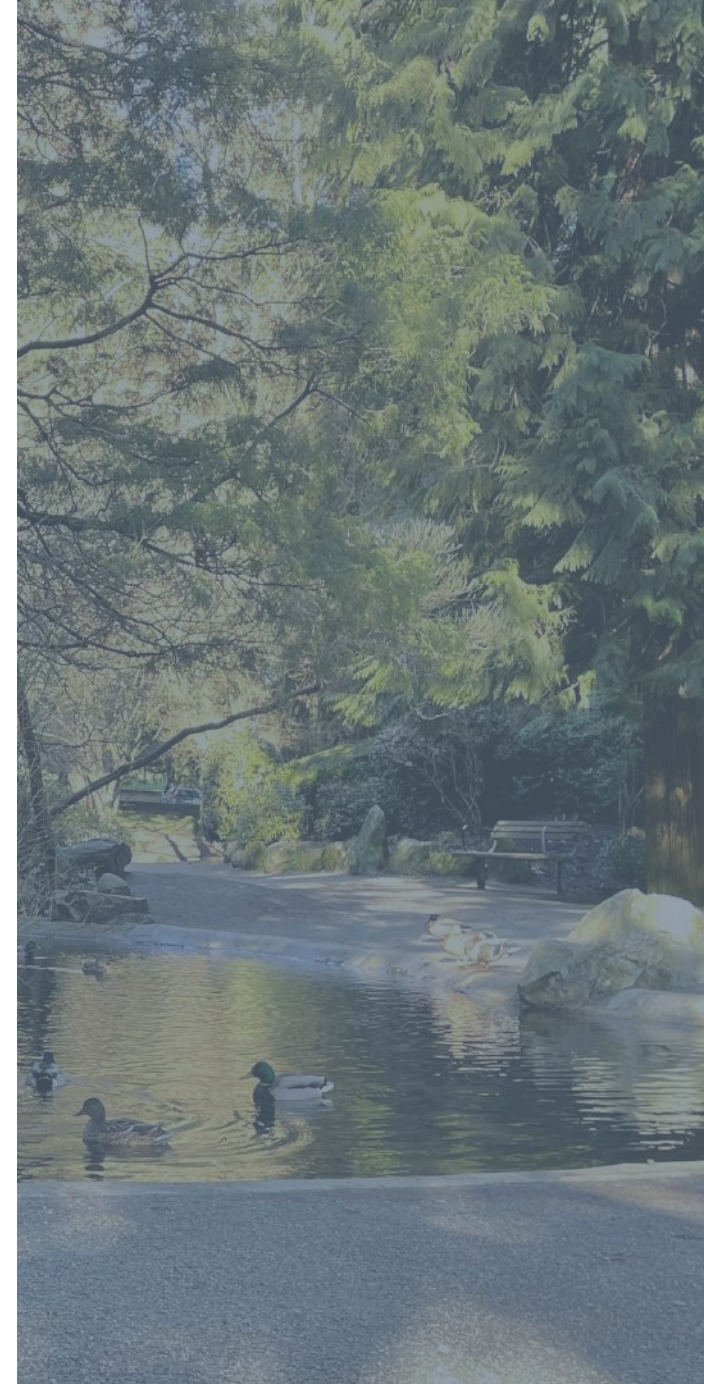


Image 7. A pond near City Hall in New Westminster

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# APPENDICES



# APPENDIX A PROJECT PARTNERS

## City of New Westminster

John Stark, Supervisor of Community Planning, who will be the project lead and who the students will report to on a regular basis, and Emily Huang, Affordable Housing Planning Analyst, who will assist the project team and will be available to address any requests or issues that arise.

## Homelessness Coalition Society

Betina Wheeler, Coordinator, Homelessness Coalition Society, who will act in a resource capacity and will facilitate access to the 20+ member organizations that have a mandate to address homelessness in New Westminster.

## Community Action Network (CAN) Leadership Training Program Graduates

CAN Program Graduates will be instrumental in informing and implementing engagement activities with individuals with lived and living experience in homelessness, being members of the working group tasked with developing the strategy, and sharing their experience and knowledge with City staff and SCARP Project students. Anur Mehdic will be the primary contact for the CAN Graduates. We will also consult with the City's Public Engagement team.



## APPENDIX B OUR TEAM



**William Canero** (he/they)

*BA Political Science*

*Master of Community and Regional Planning (2022)*

Currently serving as a Director for the Kathara Society, SEACHS, UBC GSS and PSA. William has had the privilege of facilitating consultations with the Pilipinx community, lead non-profits through strategic and long term planning, and has recently worked with Burnaby's Planning Department on ethnic business and farmer protections, arts and culture within the OCP, and Indigenous co-management.



**Zoe Howell** (she/her)

*BA Sociology and Psychology*

*Master of Community and Regional Planning (2022)*

Zoe is passionate about social planning and equity. Her interests include community engagement, housing, homelessness, and food systems. She has engagement and research experience with marginalized communities. Zoe also has also conducted non-profit program evaluation. All of these experiences have required Zoe to create and nurture relationships with the community members that her work impacts. As a result, she brings a great degree of sensitivity and empathy to her work.



**Joanne Nellis** (she/her)

*BA Global Environmental Systems*

*Master of Community and Regional Planning (2022)*

With an interest in social equity, climate justice, and affordable housing, Joanne has worked with numerous non-profit organisations on projects focused on planning for vulnerable populations. Some include: Indigenous housing for both on and off reserves, climate impacts on seniors and people experiencing homelessness, and municipal climate action for equity-deserving populations.

# APPENDIX C PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Our project sought to accomplish the following five objectives:

## 1 Gather information on:

- **Promising and emerging practices** for community engagement, action plans, and implementation plans from strategies and plans addressing homelessness across Canada
- **Theories** for best engaging with individuals with lived and living experience of homelessness.
- **Homeless data** in order to identify demographic gaps in representation and servicing.

## 2 Engage and consult with:

- **Business and resident interests** to identify their concerns and brainstorm solutions to homelessness and how they can be involved
- **Individuals with lived and living experience of homelessness** to ensure that their diverse and unique needs are documented, that their barriers to access is understood, and that the proposed actions or interventions are appropriate and responsive.

- **Community members** to educate them on current measures to address homeless, identify resident concerns or issues, potential opportunities, and proposed actions for addressing homelessness
- **Service providers** to engage a perspective which may have been missed or overlooked, and to explore issues in more detail (e.g., mental health or substance use).

## 3 Participate in the Homelessness Action Strategy Working Group to:

- **Receive and incorporate feedback** on the engagement strategy, action items, and implementation plan
- **Identify gaps and needs** in service provisions
- **Foster relationships** and communication amongst faith-based and nonprofit organizations, business and resident associations, City Departments, senior government ministries, and the Community Action Network (CAN) in New Westminster

- **Inform recommended actions**, ensuring that they are responsive to the diverse and unique needs of the homeless, and that they eliminate or significantly reduce barriers to access.

## 4 Identify short and long-term action items that work to prevent homelessness, aid those currently experiencing homelessness through service provision, and create pathways out of homelessness.

## 5 Co-create the Homelessness Action Strategy with City staff, people with lived and living experience of homelessness, and the Working Group.

# APPENDIX D KEY TERMS

This glossary of terms identifies terms used throughout this report and their meaning in the context of this report.

## Homelessness

Homelessness “is the situation of an individual, family, or community without stable, safe, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means, and ability of acquiring it.” (Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, 2012)

## Sheltered Homelessness

Sheltered homelessness “refers to people who, because they cannot secure permanent housing, are accessing emergency shelter and system supports, generally provided at no cost or minimal cost to the user” (Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, 2012).

## Unsheltered Homelessness

Unsheltered homelessness “includes people who lack housing and are not accessing emergency shelters or accommodation, except during extreme weather conditions. In most cases, people are staying in places that are not designed for or fit for human habitation.” (Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, 2012).

## Hidden Homelessness

Hidden homelessness “refers to people who live temporarily with others but without guarantee of continued residency or immediate prospects for accessing permanent housing. This describes people who are staying with relatives, friends, neighbours or strangers because they have no other option.” (Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, 2012).

## Indigenous Homelessness

Indigenous homelessness “ is a human condition that describes First Nations, Métis and Inuit individuals, families or communities lacking stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means or ability to acquire such housing. Unlike the common colonialist definition of homelessness, Indigenous homelessness is not defined as lacking a structure of habitation; rather, it is more fully described and understood through a composite lens of Indigenous worldviews. These include: individuals, families and communities isolated from their relationships to land, water, place, family, kin, each other, animals, cultures, languages and identities. Importantly,

Indigenous people experiencing these kinds of homelessness cannot culturally, spiritually, emotionally or physically reconnect with their Indigeneity or lost relationships” (Thistle, 2017).

## Equity-Seeking Communities

Equity-Seeking Groups “ are communities that face significant collective challenges in participating in society. This marginalization could be created by attitudinal, historic, social and environmental barriers based on age, ethnicity, disability, economic status, gender, nationality, race, sexual orientation and transgender status, etc. Equity-seeking groups are those that identify barriers to equal access, opportunities and resources due to disadvantage and discrimination and actively seek social justice and reparation.” (Canada Council for Arts, n.d.).

## **Appendix E: Homelessness Resource Update Bulletin**

The following are recent initiatives that will directly or indirectly address homelessness in New Westminster. This bulletin is intended to be of assistance to working group members in understanding which needs and gaps are being addressed, and to what extent, and in proposing new or expanded actions or initiatives to address homelessness. It will be prepared and distributed to working group members on a monthly basis.

### **Enhanced Homeless Outreach, Referral and Advocacy Services**

The City has allocated \$90,000 for enhanced homeless outreach, referral and advocacy services, and circulated a request for proposals. Lookout Housing and Health Society, who was the successful proponent, has now retained a second outreach worker. The two outreach workers are responding to City staff requests for assistance, and are also working in the community, with one of the workers available 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Sunday through Thursday, and the other worker available 11:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., Friday and Saturday. City Council has received a staff request for funding to extend these services to the end of 2022.

### **Enhanced Emergency Shelter Capacity**

The Lower Mainland Purpose Society successfully applied for a Temporary Use Permit to allow for an emergency shelter on the lower floor of the former Army and Navy Department, which will be accessible off of Front Street. The emergency shelter will be either an extreme weather response program shelter, which will be operational from November 1 and March 31 and activated during extreme weather events, or an emergency response centre shelter, which will be operational for up to 18 months or until new supportive housing is developed. The permit will allow up to 50 mats or beds and meet the needs of unsheltered adults. BC Housing will fund the emergency shelter.

Based on the most recent information, it will commence as an extreme weather response shelter, which may be operational, depending on weather conditions, by November 30, 2021, and may transition into an emergency winter shelter, which will be operational during evenings, seven days per week.

### **New Supported and Non-Market Housing Units**

The City, in partnership with BC Housing and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, is undertaken a development approvals process for two projects with a total of 110 supportive and non-market housing units. The first project, located at 60 to 68 Sixth Street, will have 52

modular supportive housing units which will meet the needs of individuals with a history of homelessness. A non-profit operator has yet to be selected, and, if approved, the units may be ready for occupancy in winter or early-spring 2023. The second project, located at 350 to 366 Fenton Street, will have 58 non-market housing units, which will meet the needs of Indigenous community members with precarious housing status. The non-profit operator is the Vancouver Native Housing Society and the units may be ready for occupancy by spring 2023. The public hearing for both projects is December 6, 2021.

The Aboriginal Land Trust Society has gained development approval for 96 non-market housing units located at 823 to 841 Sixth Street. The housing, which is in the form of a six-storey apartment, will meet the needs of Indigenous and Swahili community members with precarious housing status. Construction is about to commence, with occupancy likely to occur in spring or summer 2023.

### **Integrated Response Team**

The new Fraser Health Integrated Response Team will support sheltered and unsheltered vulnerable individuals in New Westminster and the Tri-Cities. A new manager is being hired to operate the service, which will be comprised of a mix of nursing, allied health professionals, and clinical and peer support workers. The service will operate between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., seven days per week, with an average of two staff per day in each community, which is double the current number.

### **Health Contact Centre**

The Health Contact Centre, which includes an overdose prevention site and other harm reduction services, has been operational for about seven months. As of September 2021, it had recorded over 700 visits and there were no overdose deaths. The centre operates from 3:30 to 10:00 p.m. and offers witnessed consumption, community referrals, drug testing, and peer support. There is increasing evidence that illicit drug use and overdoses are happening early in the day and when the centre is not operational.

The City is preparing a case for support for expanded operating hours and staffing for the centre, including during the morning and early-afternoon, and when complete, the City will hold discussions with Fraser Health.

### **Personal Identification Services**

City staff circulated a request for proposals for a non-profit organization to offer personal identification services to those who are unsheltered or who are precariously housed. Of note, not having personal identification limits an individual's ability to access government benefits and services, including those related to COVID-19. Based on the request for proposals, the City

received two submissions, and after an evaluation, has selected a non-profit operator, which will be announced shortly.

# APPENDIX F PROMISING AND EMERGING PRACTICES

## Journey Home

 Kelowna, BC

 2018 - 2023

### Quick Facts

- Over 2000 people engaged.
- Employed a variety of engagement methods to inform the strategy.
- A dramatic increase in funding equaling \$47 Million over 5 years going towards Supports, Housing, and Backbone Organisation and Coordination.

### Unique Features

- Engaged individuals with lived experiences relating to homelessness through listening circles.

## Homelessness Strategy

 Richmond, BC

 2019 - 2029

### Quick Facts

- 275 individuals engaged through various engagement methods.
- Categorizes strategy actions into priority categories for the elimination of homelessness.

### Unique Features

- Focus group engagements revealed the true estimated count of individuals accessing homelessness services as double the population count at the time of the Strategy's creation.
- Ambitious goal of making homelessness “rare, brief, and non-recurring” by 2029 in the municipality.

## A Home for Everyone

 Vancouver, BC

 2012 - 2021

### Quick Facts

- In the development of the strategy over 3000 people were consulted through various engagement forums.
- Consolidates the priorities of the strategy into three pillars that focus on housing supply, housing affordability, and the support of non-profit service providers.

### Unique Features

- Incorporates a Housing First approach directly into the creation, implementation, and evaluation of the Strategy.
- A separate strategy relating to housing affordability, Housing Vancouver 2018-2027, was created to respond to the rising unaffordability residents were experiencing.



## Poverty Reduction Plan



North Vancouver, BC (City & District)



2021 - 2031

### Quick Facts

- The City and District of North Vancouver and the District of North Vancouver collaborated together in the creation of the 10-year strategy.
- The Homelessness Action Initiative supports the Poverty Reduction Plan that incorporates Partners from BC Housing, Vancouver Coastal Health, The Tsleil-Waututh and Squamish Nations, and the three municipalities noted previously.

### Unique Features

- The strategy scopes intended outcomes and impacts that are further supported through other committees and working groups that extend across multiple jurisdictions.
- Several social and community service agencies have a common North Shore program or service, which makes the multi-jurisdictional approach consistent with the reality of services provision in the region.



## Community Plan to End Homelessness



Victoria, BC



2019 - 2024

### Quick Facts

- In 2020, approximately 1500 people were experiencing homelessness in the capital region, those precariously housed not included.
- \$90 Million has been dedicated to the implementation of the strategy through various levels of government in addressing chronic homelessness.

### Unique Features

- The Strategy features a Citizens Grade evaluating the actions taken to address the priorities of the previous strategy and outlines areas of priority for improvement as determined from public engagements.
- Features SMART Goals as the basis of establishing initiatives.



## A Place to Call Home



Edmonton, AB



2017

### Quick Facts

- Approximately 1% of Edmontonians experienced homelessness in 2016.
- Benchmarks an additional \$30 Million per year in funding to support homelessness interventions on top of the \$35 Million per year.

### Unique Features

- The plan highlights both additional funding required to support the strategy to be sourced from various levels of government as well as cost-saving measures the Strategy will have on government services like healthcare and policing.
- The Plan aims to move homelessness to functionally zero state in which homelessness is “prevented whenever possible or is otherwise a rare, brief, and non-recurring experience.”



## Home Again

 Portland, OR

 2005 - 2015

### Quick Facts

- On a “One Night Shelter Count” in 2014, 52% of homeless systems served persons in families with children, 47% were single adults, and 1% were unaccompanied youth.
- Between 2002-2003, the homeless systems served 16,731 persons.

### Unique Features

- In the past, multiple service providers provided short-term rental assistance programs that were managed by various funders from four jurisdictions. In order to sustain homeless individuals in permanent housing, a streamlined program of rental assistance was provided by a single entity. This solution created a unified system that will have consistent program guidelines, shared outcomes to track housing stability, and a shared allocation formula.

## Pathways Home

 Seattle, WA

 2016

### Quick Facts

- Prior to COVID-19, permitted villages saw a 34% exit rate of individuals moving into permanent housing.
- People of colour experience homelessness at disproportionately high rates. 35% of applicants for Seattle’s rent assistance program came from people of colour.

### Unique Features

- The City established City-permitted villages that provide safer spaces for those living on the streets. The City has seven permitted villages that offer a place for street entrenched individuals to find stability and connect to housing resources. Villages include tiny house structures, access to restrooms and showers, case management, a kitchen, and a managed community.

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## **Appendix G: City of New Westminster Homelessness Action Strategy Engagement Framework**

Last updated on November 22, 2021

### **Purpose**

The Homelessness Action Strategy will develop a five-year vision and plan for addressing homelessness in New Westminster. The strategy will meet the diverse needs of the homeless population, ensuring that facilities, programs and services are responsive, and that barriers to access are eliminated or significantly reduced.

The draft engagement framework, which will inform strategy development, will be an inclusive one, which will involve people with lived and living experience of homelessness, businesses, residents, and service providers. Regarding the former, efforts will be made to incorporate perspectives and voices that are often not heard, which will ensure that the strategy is responsive to their diverse and unique needs.

### **Key Partners**

The preparation of the strategy, including the draft engagement framework in which it will be based, is a collaboration between the City of New Westminster, the UBC School of Community and Regional Planning, and the Community Action Network (CAN). The City is providing overall guidance related to preparation; UBC, through three of its graduate level students, is conducting research and co-developing and jointly implementing the draft engagement framework; and CAN leaders, who have lived and living experience of homelessness, are ensuring that the draft engagement framework is representative of the different perspectives and voices related to homelessness, and that the strategy is responsive to their diverse and unique needs.

### **Context**

The March 2020 Homeless Count enumerated 52 unsheltered and 71 sheltered homeless people in New Westminster. As with all homeless counts, this is likely a significant undercount of the true extent of unsheltered homelessness.

Since the count and as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is evidence that the numbers of unsheltered homeless have significantly increased. Contributing factors include: the reduction in shelter capacity due to physical distancing requirements; the impacts of employment and income disruption, which are contributing to mental health and substance misuse issues; and the reluctance on behalf of family members and friends to accommodate people on a temporary basis given fears of virus transmission.

In September 2021, City staff reached out to service providers with a mandate to address homelessness in New Westminster. These service providers, based on their interactions and observations, believe that the number of unsheltered homeless, including those who are 'couch surfing,' is likely now three to four times the pre-pandemic number.

## **Engagement Objectives**

The draft engagement framework is based on the following objectives:

- To consult with the working group on the draft engagement framework and to seek its feedback and suggestions to ensure that the engagement process is meaningful, purposeful, and safe.
- To involve the working group in reaching out to and engaging under-represented homeless groups, including immigrants, Indigenous peoples, refugees, seniors, women, youth, and LGBTQ2S and racialized community members.
- To document the needs of these and other under-represented homeless groups, including related to barriers to access, and to solicit their suggestions related to strategic actions.
- To engage the working group in brainstorming and other engagement exercises to better understand needs, gaps and barriers to access, and to solicit suggestions related to strategic actions.
- To involve representatives from faith-based and non-profit organizations that are not part of the working group in identifying needs, gaps and barriers to access, and soliciting suggestions related to strategic actions.
- To involve business and resident associations and groups in identifying issues related to homelessness and soliciting suggestions related to strategic actions, including defining a role for both to play in being part of the solution.
- To involve the broader community in a dialogue about homelessness, to enhance their understanding of the issue, including through a panel discussion, and to solicit suggestions related to strategic actions, including defining a role for them to play in being part of the solution.

## **Engagement Principles**

The draft engagement framework will be guided by the following principles:

- To engage a diversity of interests, perspective and voices, including individuals with lived and living experience of homelessness.
- To create a safe environment for all people to engage - e.g., familiar setting or venue.
- To leverage those who have a relationship and trust to assist with, facilitate and/or support engagement activities - e.g., staff or volunteers.
- To provide a variety of ways to engage - e.g., group discussions, individual interviews, on-line surveys, etc.
- To address potential barriers to engagement - e.g., language, literacy, technology, etc.
- To anticipate and respond to potentially traumatic situations - e.g., engagement guidelines, facilitator training, staff or volunteer involvement, etc.
- To ensure a meaningful engagement process, including sharing how information will be used.

## Engagement Techniques

### *Focused Engagement with Individuals with Lived and Living Experience of Homelessness* - January and February 2022

Homeless counts and homeless surveys tend to be dominated by males (73% based on the 2020 homeless count) and those who are between the ages of 25 and 54 (67%), live alone (83%) and who are white (79%). This is a reflection that these groups and populations are aware of and are more likely to utilize facilities, programs and services for the homeless. Of note, homeless counts and homeless surveys tend to be conducted in such locations.

All homeless counts under-report the true extent of homelessness, particularly by certain groups and populations, including immigrants and refugees (14%), racialized communities (21%), seniors (24%)<sup>1</sup>, youth (9%) and women (25%), as well as those identifying as LGBTQ2S (11%). These groups and populations tend to live temporarily with family and friends, and are often referred to as “couch surfers” or the “hidden homeless.” Indigenous peoples (33%) are over-represented among the homeless yet their perspectives and voices tend to be under-represented.

There are various barriers to these under-represented groups and populations accessing facilities, programs and services, including accessibility, adaptability, age, appropriateness, culture, language, safety, and sexual orientation. As such, they have diverse and unique needs which are often not reflected in facilities, programs and services for the homeless.

Given the above, most homeless plans and strategies, including those reviewed as part of the research for this strategy, conduct focused engagement with these under-represented groups and populations, as well as others. This ensures that their diverse and unique needs are documented, that their barriers to access are understood, and that the proposed actions or interventions are appropriate and responsive. Most significantly, they are provided with a voice, instead of others speaking on their behalf.

The below groups and populations have been identified for focused engagement, along with the reasons for their inclusion. The specific service providers we hope to involve to facilitate this engagement are listed in Appendix A.

<b>Immigrants, Refugees and Racialized Communities</b>	<b>Seniors (55+)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Under-represented as part of regional counts.</li> <li>● Limited count survey information.</li> <li>● Part of hidden homeless.</li> <li>● Reluctant to utilize facilities, programs and services – e.g., culture, immigration status, language, stigma.</li> <li>● Diverse and unique needs.</li> <li>● Typically do not have a voice.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Under-represented as part of regional counts.</li> <li>● Limited count survey information.</li> <li>● Part of hidden homeless.</li> <li>● Reluctant to utilize facilities, programs and services – e.g., accessibility, adaptability, safety.</li> <li>● Diverse and unique needs.</li> <li>● Typically do not have a voice.</li> </ul>
<b>Youth and Young Adults (Under 25)</b>	<b>Women</b>

<sup>1</sup> People who are homeless demonstrate signs of aging earlier than those who are securely housed, and, as such, a homeless senior is defined as someone who is 55 years or older.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Under-represented as part of regional counts.</li> <li>● Limited count survey information.</li> <li>● Part of hidden homeless.</li> <li>● Reluctant to utilize facilities, programs and services – e.g., age restrictions, availability, responsiveness, safety.</li> <li>● Diverse and unique needs.</li> <li>● Typically do not have a voice.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Under-represented as part of regional counts.</li> <li>● Limited count survey information.</li> <li>● Part of hidden homeless.</li> <li>● Reluctant to utilize facilities, programs and services – e.g., ability to accommodate children, availability, responsiveness, safety.</li> <li>● Diverse and unique needs.</li> <li>● Typically do not have a voice.</li> </ul>
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<b>LGBTQ2S+</b>	<b>Indigenous Peoples</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Under-represented as part of regional counts.</li> <li>● Limited count survey information.</li> <li>● Part of hidden homeless.</li> <li>● Reluctant to utilize facilities, programs and services – e.g., availability, discrimination, responsiveness, safety.</li> <li>● Diverse and unique needs.</li> <li>● Typically do not have a voice.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Responsiveness of facilities, programs and services – e.g., cultural appropriateness, discrimination, responsiveness.</li> <li>● Diverse and unique needs.</li> <li>● Typically do not have a voice.</li> </ul>

Community Action Network (CAN) leaders will be instrumental in informing the focused engagement sessions. Based on discussions to date, they are interested in exploring deep listening circles, which are less structured than focus group discussions, and enable participants to take more control of the agenda, and share their experiences and insights. To focus the discussions, contextual statements will be shared, which will provide some information about the purpose of the engagement, the desire to better understand needs, gaps and barriers to access related to homelessness, and a request to share actions or interventions that would assist them.

CAN leaders will have the opportunity to facilitate or host the sessions, and will be provided with training and other assistance if needed. City staff and UBC students are available to act in a support capacity if it does not compromise comfort or safety on behalf of participants. If their involvement is not deemed appropriate, then CAN leaders and service providers, possibly through staff or volunteers, could assist with logistical support and notetaking.

The sessions will comprise between five and seven participants, and may include a staff member or volunteer who has a relationship and trust with the participants. These sessions will be held in locations that are familiar to the participants and will be about 75 minutes in length. They will also be catered, and any logistical barriers to participation will be addressed (e.g., transit fares). If health regulations do not permit in-person sessions, then on-line platforms will be used but efforts will be made to address any barriers that this format may present. Participants will be provided with a restaurant gift card (e.g., Tim Hortons) in the amount of \$25 in recognition of their contributions, and informed as to how their input will be used in the development of the strategy, including the action plan.

***Focused Engagement with Business and Residents Associations*** - December 2021

Businesses and residents have been impacted by homelessness but have limited opportunities to share their concerns or be part of the solution. Often, their interactions are adversarial, and they often do not understand municipal limitations related to enforcement, or proposed City actions to address their

concerns. Some business and resident interests want to know what they can do to make a difference in their neighbourhoods, and to ensure that facilities, programs and services are responsive to their needs too – e.g., hours of operation, litter collection, etc.

City staff and UBC students are holding one focus group with business associations and one focus group with resident associations. The focus groups will utilize an on-line platform; engage five to twelve participants; and be 90 minutes in length. A presentation will be provided for contextual purposes and to enable participants to more fully and meaningfully participate. Regarding potential business and resident impacts related to homelessness, this will be covered as part of the presentation in order to focus the discussion more on ideas and suggestions to address the identified issues, and to explore how business and resident associations can be part of the solution.

### ***Community Engagement*** - February 2022

Based on the City's Budget 2022 survey, 30% of respondents identified homelessness and 43% of respondents identified housing affordability as some of the most important issues in New Westminster. This level of concern speaks to the interest in these issues, and the need for action in addressing them.

Community members are generally not aware of City actions in addressing these issues, and the difficulties in realizing new emergency shelter capacity and supportive and non-market housing. They are also not aware of ways in which they can assist in addressing these issues.

To this end, it is proposed that there be a panel discussion, followed by an open house if in person or a question and answer session if an on-line platform is used. The panel discussion will address topics such as:

- Homelessness situation
- City actions to address homelessness
- Need for a strategy
- Key findings from research and focused engagement
- Perspectives on homelessness
- Proposed actions and next steps

The panel discussion, and open house or question and answer session, will be used to launch a community survey to identify resident concerns or issues, potential opportunities, and proposed actions for addressing homelessness. The survey will provide an opportunity for participation and feedback for those who were not part of the focused engagement sessions. This event will be facilitated by City staff, UBC students, CAN leaders, and other individuals to be identified at a later date.

### ***Working Group Engagement*** - October 2021 to March 2022

The Homelessness Action Strategy Working Group has representation from 10 faith-based and non-profit organizations, two business and two resident associations, three City Departments, and senior government ministries, as well as two Community Action Network (CAN) leaders and a UBC student. Regarding CAN, these individuals have lived and living experience of homelessness, and are considered subject matter experts.

The working group will be engaged throughout the development of the strategy, and as part of the engagement. Regarding the latter, they will assist in hosting the focused engagement sessions, identify potential participants, and possibly encourage staff or volunteers to provide support. The working group will inform proposed actions, ensuring that they are responsive to the diverse and unique needs of the homeless, and that they eliminate or significantly reduce barriers to access.

### ***Key Informant Engagement*** - November 2021 to March 2022

Key informant interviews will be conducted with service providers, and individuals with lived and living experience of homelessness who may not feel comfortable as part of a group discussion. Regarding the former, this will be an opportunity to involve service providers who are not part of the working group, to engage a perspective which may have been missed or overlooked, and to explore issues in more detail (e.g., mental health or substance use). As for the latter, these interviews may be conducted by a UBC student or a CAN leader, or by a staff member or volunteer of an organization in which an individual with lived or living experience of homelessness is utilizing, and in which he or she may have a relationship and trust.

## **Communications, Promotion, and Recruitment**

### ***Focused Engagement with Individuals with Lived and Living Experience of Homelessness***

Service providers will play an instrumental role with regard to the focused engagement sessions with individuals with lived and living experience of homelessness. More specifically, they will be encouraged to host the sessions, identify potential participants, and provide staffing or volunteer support. The City will provide catering, materials and printing, restaurant gift cards for participants, and address any barriers to participation (e.g., transit fares); the UBC students can provide logistical support, including note taking, if appropriate; and the CAN leaders will facilitate the sessions if comfortable to do so. Of note, most of the service providers who will be encouraged to host a session are represented on the working group, and are supportive of the strategy.

### ***Focused Engagement with Business and Residents Associations***

Business and resident associations will be solicited to participate in the focus group discussions. This will be achieved through a direct e-mail request from the City, with City staff and UBC students facilitating and providing logistical support for the sessions.

### ***Community Engagement***

Panelists will be recruited based on the topics to be covered, and will provide contextual information which will be of assistance to community members in responding to the survey, or posing questions as part of an on-line question and answer session. The event will be promoted by way of CityPage and the City's social media accounts; distribution groups associated with advisory and community committees; media posts and posters; and through the working group.

### ***Working Group Engagement***

Working group members were identified by City staff and recruited by way of an e-mail invitation, which included a draft terms of reference document. The working group comprises about 20 members, representing the inter-sectional nature of homelessness, including cultural, ethnic, seniors, women, and youth.

### ***Key Informant Interviews***

Key informants will be identified by City staff and recruited by way of e-mail, or identified by service providers in the case of individuals with lived and living experience of homelessness. Regarding the latter, these individuals may not feel comfortable in engaging in a group setting. The interviews will take between 30 and 60 minutes.

### **Evaluation**

The engagement activities will be monitored as to their effectiveness in achieving the engagement objectives, and changes will be made if necessary. They will also be evaluated as to how representative they are of the different perspectives and voices related to homelessness. If gaps are identified, then focused engagement sessions and/or key informant interviews may be utilized for this purpose.

### **Risk Mitigation Measures**

The following potential risks and risk mitigation measures have been identified related to the draft engagement framework:

- The difficulty in accessing or reaching certain homeless groups such as LGBTQ2S community members. Engage service providers addressing the needs of such groups, and look at a variety of engagement techniques to facilitate involvement.
- The complexity of the subject matter and the difficulty on behalf of community members and others to be meaningfully engaged, including with regard to suggesting strategic actions. Provide contextual information to better equip participants to be engaged, and consider listing potential actions and having participants rank them in order of preference.
- The demands on CAN leaders and UBC students, particularly given other priorities in their lives. Ensure ongoing communication, and enlist additional staff resources if necessary.
- The sensitivity of the topics to be covered in the focused engagement sessions, and the possibility of traumatic experiences being raised. Provide engagement guidelines and training for facilitators and involve staff and volunteers who have a relationship and trust with potential participants.
- The tight timelines associated with the draft engagement framework. Enlist additional City staff resources if necessary and build in some flexibility with regard to timelines.



## **Appendix #1: Potential Participants**

### ***Focused Engagement with Individuals with Lived and Living Experience of Homelessness***

The following focused engagement sessions are proposed, along with the service provider(s) that may potentially host and be involved in the session:

- Indigenous Peoples – Spirit of the Children Society
- LGBTQ2S – TBD
- New Immigrants and Refugees, including those with precarious status – Umbrellas Multicultural Health Co-op and the WINS Local Immigration Partnership Council
- Seniors – Seniors Services Society
- Youth, including youth aging out of care – Aunt Leah’s Place and Purpose Society
- Women – Elizabeth Fry Society

### ***Focused Engagement with Business and Residents Associations***

The following business associations have been identified:

- New Westminster Chamber of Commerce
- Downtown Business Improvement Association
- Sapperton Business Association
- Uptown Business Association
- West End Business Association
- Others ...

The following resident associations have been identified:

- Brow of the Hill Residents’ Association
- Connaught Heights Residents’ Association
- Downtown Residents’ Association
- Glenbrooke North Residents’ Association
- McBride-Sapperton Residents’ Association
- Massey Victory Heights Residents’ Association
- Moody Park Residents’ Association
- Quayside Residents’ Association
- Queen’s Park Area Residents’ Association
- Queensborough Residents’ Association
- Victoria Hill-Ginger Drive Residents’ Association
- West End Residents’ Association

### ***Key Informant Interviews***

The following potential key informants have been identified:

- Travis Walker, Health Contact Centre, Purpose Society - can discuss homelessness from the perspective of adults who are experiencing substance use issues.
- Anne Wiebe, New Leaf Clubhouse, Fraserside Community Services Society - can discuss homelessness from the perspective of adults who are experiencing mental health issues.
- Betina Wheeler, Coordinator, New Westminster Homelessness Coalition Society - can discuss the potential role of the Coalition, and provide a better understanding of food security and its relationship to reducing homelessness.
- Lorrie Wasyliw, Executive Director, Women In Need Gaining Strength - can discuss homelessness from the perspective of women and children fleeing abuse.
- Cathy Zanella, Outreach Worker, Lookout Housing and Health Society - can discuss homelessness from the perspective of an outreach worker.
- Others ...

DRAFT

# **Appendix H: City of New Westminster Homelessness Action Strategy Working Group Draft Terms of Reference**

Updated October 4, 2021

## ***Purpose***

The Homelessness Action Strategy Working Group (the working group) will assist with the development of a new Homelessness Action Strategy (the strategy). The strategy will build on the recently completed draft of the Homelessness Needs Assessment (the assessment) and provide a vision and plan for addressing homelessness over the next five years in New Westminster.

## ***Need***

The March 2020 Homeless Count enumerated 52 unsheltered and 71 sheltered homeless people in New Westminster. As with all homeless counts, this is likely a significant undercount of the true extent of unsheltered homelessness.

Since the count and as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is evidence that the numbers of unsheltered homeless have significantly increased. Contributing factors include: the reduction in shelter capacity due to physical distancing requirements; the impacts of employment and income disruption, which are contributing to mental health and substance misuse issues; and the reluctance on behalf of family members and friends to accommodate people on a temporary basis given fears of virus transmission.

In September 2022, City staff reached out to service providers with a mandate to address homelessness in New Westminster. These service providers, based on their interactions and observations, believe that the number of unsheltered homeless, including those who are 'couch surfing,' is likely now in the hundreds.

## ***Membership***

The working group will include a diversity of perspectives, including from the City, business associations, faith-based and non-profit organizations, residents groups, and the senior levels of government. A key perspective and voice will be individuals with lived and living experience in homelessness, which are seen as subject matter experts. There will also be engagement by one or more graduate students from the School of Community and Regional Planning (SCARP) at the University of British Columbia, who will be assisting in the development of the strategy.

For a listing of potential member organizations and representatives, please see attachment #1.

## ***Principal Responsibilities***

The principal responsibilities of working group members is to:

- represent your area of interest, organization and/or population served;
- share your experience, knowledge and perspectives;
- contribute to discussions and be respectful of the contributions of others;
- identify gaps and needs, and areas for further research;
- think creatively and collaboratively;
- suggest actions to address identified issues, including in the short, medium and longer term; and,
- review and sign-off on final strategy, including action plan.

## ***Role of CAN Graduates and UBC SCARP Graduate Students***

The Community Action Network Leadership Training Program graduates, who have lived and living experience in homelessness and who have successfully completed a seven-part training program, will:

- engage on the working group;
- inform the engagement program and assist with its implementation;
- participate in presentations;
- shape the actions, including ensuring that they meet the diverse needs of individuals experiencing or at-risk of homelessness; and,
- work closely with City staff and UBC SCARP students on the development of the strategy.

The three UBC SCARP graduate students, who as part of their required studio project, will:

- review homelessness plans and strategies in order jurisdictions in British Columbia, with particular reference to actions and implementation steps;
- develop an engagement program in close consultation with City staff and CAN Program graduates;
- present, with CAN Program graduates, to the Homelessness Coalition, the City's Affordable Housing and Child Care Task Force, and the working group;
- prepare the strategy in consultation with City staff and CAN Program graduates and based on the direction and feedback from the working group; and,
- present the final strategy, with City staff and CAN Program graduates, to Council.

## ***Staffing Support***

The working group will be supported by John Stark, the Supervisor of Community Planning, and Emily Huang, the Affordable Housing Planning Analyst. This support will include but not be limited to:

- chairing meetings;
- scheduling and coordinating meetings;
- recording and distributing minutes;
- assisting with engagement program development and implementation, including resourcing;
- facilitating meeting presentations to external bodies;
- coordinating strategy development;
- addressing issues that may arise; and,
- formatting the strategy, and facilitating its sign-off.

### ***Duration***

The working group will meet five times throughout the development of the strategy – i.e., from mid-October 2021 to April 2022. The meetings will be held remotely, and in the late-afternoon (i.e., 6:00 p.m.) to facilitate participation by potential members who may have work related commitments during the day. The meetings will be a maximum of two hours, and will be focused to maximize everyone’s limited and valuable time.

## ***Attachment #1: Proposed Membership***

Please note that this is the proposed membership. City staff will reach out to identified organizations and individuals to determine if they are available to participate.

<b>Area of Interest, Organization or Perspective</b>	<b>Representative</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City of New Westminster (2) – Senior Bylaw Officer and Vulnerable Persons Liaison Officer</li> </ul>	Veronika Metchie
	Camille Oliveire
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community Action Network (2)</li> </ul>	TBD
	TBD
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aunt Leah’s Place (1)</li> </ul>	Sarah Stewart
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Downtown NW Business Improvement Association (1)</li> </ul>	Kendra Johnston
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Downtown Residents’ Association (1)</li> </ul>	Quentin Vandermerwe
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elizabeth Fry Society (1)</li> </ul>	Bonnie Moriarty
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fraser Health (2) – Community Health Specialist and Manager, Mental Health and Substance Use Services</li> </ul>	Natalie Johnston
	Allison Luke
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Health Contact Centre (Overdose Prevention Site) (1)</li> </ul>	Travis Walker
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lookout Housing and Health Society (1)</li> </ul>	Dave Brown
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>McBride-Sapperton Residents’ Association (1)</li> </ul>	Gagan Sivia
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New Westminster Chamber of Commerce (1)</li> </ul>	Nikki Morris
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New Westminster Homelessness Coalition Society (1)</li> </ul>	Betina Wheeler
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New Westminster Inter-Ministerial Association (1)</li> </ul>	Laurie McKay-Deacon
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seniors Services Society (1)</li> </ul>	Karl San Ramon
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Spirit of the Children Society (1)</li> </ul>	Blain Kane
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UBC School of Community and Regional Planning (1)</li> </ul>	TBD
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Union Gospel Mission (1)</li> </ul>	Bill Wong
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Women In Need Gaining Strength (1)</li> </ul>	Lorrie Wasyliw

## **Appendix I: Business Associations Focussed Discussion Script**

*SLIDE 1-3 - Emily*

*SLIDE 4 - Purpose*

The purpose of this focus group session is to hear from each of you, who represent the business community, and have voiced the impacts of homelessness in the past. The business community often wants to help with these issues but may not know where to start. Businesses also want to know how they can make a difference. We hope this space tonight will provide an opportunity for you to share your thoughts, initiatives and suggested actions for addressing homelessness.

The feedback we collect from this focus group, in addition to other engagement sessions with those with lived and living experiences of homelessness, service providers, and the larger community, will inform the new Homelessness Action Strategy. The strategy is a five-year vision and plan for addressing homelessness in New Westminster. The strategy will meet the diverse needs of the homeless population, ensuring that facilities, programs and services are responsive, and that barriers to access are eliminated or significantly reduced.

*SLIDE 5 - Guiding Principles*

To create a space for everyone to share their thoughts, we've outlined these guiding principles for tonight:

- Respect is our guiding light
- Every human has value, and the language we use will reflect that
- Challenge ideas, not people

Does anyone have any additional principles they'd like to add?

I'll now pass this back to Emily who's going to provide you with an overview of homelessness in New Westminster.

*SLIDE 6-13 - Emily*

*SLIDE 14 - Questions*

Thanks Emily for providing that context. We're now going to transition into asking you some questions. Feel free to speak up or make use of the chat function.

1. We've mentioned some key concerns regarding how homelessness impacts the business community. **Are there other concerns or impacts related to homelessness that any of you would like to add?**
2. Thank you all for your input on that question. We'll now transition into our next question: **what are your ideas or suggestions for addressing homelessness?**
  - a. **Are you aware of any promising practices in other jurisdictions?**
3. Thank you for sharing your ideas and suggestions with us. We'll now move onto our last question: **how can your association or membership be part of the solution?** Some examples include distributing information, making food donations to drop-in and emergency shelter facilities, organizing neighbourhood clean-ups, etc

*SLIDE 15 - Thank you*

That was our last question. Thank you all so much for taking time out of your evenings to share your reflections and ideas with us. Your input will be very valuable to do the final Homelessness Action Strategy. If you have any questions, please contact Emily Huang at [ehuang@newwestcity.ca](mailto:ehuang@newwestcity.ca)

## **Resident Associations Focussed Discussion Script**

*SLIDE 1-3 - Emily*

*SLIDE 4 - Purpose*

The purpose of this focus group session is to hear from each of you, who represent the resident community, and have voiced the impacts of homelessness in the past. The resident community often wants to help with these issues but may not know where to start. Residents' also want to know how they can make a difference. We hope this space tonight will provide an opportunity for you to share your thoughts, initiatives and suggested actions in addressing homelessness.

The feedback we collect from this focus group, in addition to other engagement sessions with those with lived and living experiences of homelessness, service providers, and the larger community will inform the new Homelessness Action Strategy. The strategy is a five-year vision and plan for addressing homelessness in New Westminster. The strategy will meet the diverse needs of the homeless population, ensuring that facilities, programs and services are responsive, and that barriers to access are eliminated or significantly reduced.

*SLIDE 5 - Guiding Principles*

To create a space for everyone to share their thoughts, these are our guiding principles for tonight:

- Respect is our guiding light
- Every human has value, and the language we use will reflect that
- Challenge ideas, not people

Does anyone have any additional principles they'd like to add?

I'll now pass this back to Emily who's going to provide you with an overview homelessness in New Westminster.

*SLIDE 6-13 - Emily*

*SLIDE 14 - Questions*

Thanks Emily for providing that context. We're now going to transition into asking you some questions. Feel free to speak up or make use of the chat function.

1. We've mentioned some key concerns regarding how homelessness impacts the resident community. **Are there other concerns or impacts related to homelessness that any of you would like to add?**
2. Thank you all for your input on that question. We'll now transition into our next question: **what are your ideas or suggestions for addressing homelessness?**



- a. Are you aware of any promising practices in other jurisdictions?**
3. Thank you for sharing your ideas and suggestions with us. We'll now move onto our last question: **how can your association or membership be part of the solution?** Some examples include distributing information, making food donations to drop-in and emergency shelter facilities, organizing neighbourhood clean-ups, etc

*SLIDE 15 - Thank you*

That was our last question. Thank you all so much for taking time out of your evenings to share your reflections and ideas with us. Your input will be very valuable to do the final Homelessness Action Strategy. If you have any questions, please contact Emily at [ehuang@newwestcity.ca](mailto:ehuang@newwestcity.ca)

## Appendix J:

### City of New Westminster Homelessness Action Strategy

### Business Associations Focused Discussion Notes

November 29, 2021

6:30-8:00pm

#### Business Association Representatives Present:

- Gord Hobbis, Sapperton Business Association
- Erin Jeffery, Uptown Business Association
- Kendra Johnston, Downtown New Westminster Business Improvement Association
- Nikki Morris, New Westminster Chamber of Commerce

Regrets

- Lavanna LaBrey, West End Business Association

#### Questions:

##### 1. Are there other concerns or impacts related to homelessness that you would like to add?

- There was concern about mental health issues, and the lack of resources for individuals living with such issues.
- There was concern about public drug use and intoxication, and the lack of a police response, as these are illegal activities.
- There was concern about squatting and the potential for fires, particularly in the Downtown.
- There was frustration with calling the police non-emergency line.
- There was frustration with regard to who to call when you have a concern, particularly during evenings and weekends.
- There was recognition that businesses have a lot of compassion and patience but they are also “on the edge” – i.e., they are dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, and now they are dealing with a Homelessness Crisis and an Opioid Epidemic.

##### 2. What are your ideas or suggestions for addressing homelessness?

- It was suggested that a drop-in or resource centre be developed which would engage the unsheltered in “productive activities. As such, they would “not on the street and potentially engaging in problematic activities.”
- It was suggested that an “Eyes on the Night” program, similar to that in Penticton, be developed for New Westminster, which would connect businesses and residents with the unsheltered, and contribute to compassion and empathy, as well as action.

- It was suggested that businesses need more information with regard to how the City is addressing homelessness and other social issues. This would address concerns that little if anything is being done.
- It was suggested that greater emphasis be placed on supported work programs for the unsheltered. It was also suggested that businesses could provide supported employment opportunities with the right government assistance. For this to work, it was noted that potential workers would need secure and stable housing.
- It was suggested that the hours of bylaw enforcement be increased, including during evenings and weekends – i.e., a police response is not always necessary.
- It was suggested that there is a need to address business and resident misconceptions about homelessness, and a need to develop housing and support options to address this issue. More specifically, the notion that “if you build it, then they will come.” As noted, the unsheltered are not as mobile as most think.
- It was suggested that there is a need to create one number to access all City services, and that this number be operational 24/7 and that it not be a recording.
- It was suggested that there needs to be continued access to pay phones for the unsheltered, and digital inclusion initiatives, including the distribution of smart phones and enhanced access to Wi-Fi. Given the pandemic, this is not a luxury but an essential.
- There was recognition of the importance of outreach workers where they develop relationship and trust with the unsheltered, and are able to refer them to resources, services and supports.
- There was recognition that businesses are “eyes on the street” and draw activity and positive energy into an area. To this end, it was suggested that greater emphasis needs to be placed on business recruitment and retention, thus guarding against empty storefronts.
- There was support for the new Fraser Health Integrated Response Team, which will assist sheltered and unsheltered persons with mental health issues; however, it was felt that it should also operate during evenings, when these issues are most apparent.

### **3. How can your association or membership be part of the solution?**

- It was noted that businesses have not been involved in City advocacy efforts to address homelessness. It was suggested that business associations could advocate for enhanced outreach capacity, new supportive housing, etc.
- It was noted that businesses want to be part of the solution but do not know how to contribute. It was further noted that an ideas booklet or guide be developed for businesses, which would include donation, sponsorship and volunteer opportunities.
- It was suggested that businesses be recognized for their efforts in addressing homelessness and other social issues. There was a shout-out to Karima Jivraj of Bosley’s, who ensures that no pet goes hungry, and Leona Green of Greens and Beans who donates sandwiches and soup to local emergency shelters.

#### **City of New Westminster Homelessness Action Strategy**

#### **Resident Associations Focused Discussion Notes**

**November 30, 2021**

**6:30-8:00pm**

### **Resident Association Representatives Present:**

- Enzo Guerriero: Quayside Community Board
- Emy Lai: Victoria Hill Ginger Drive Residents' Association
- Gail North: Queen's Park Area Residents' Association
- Elmer Rudolph: West End Residents' Association
- Deb Thomas: Massey Victory Heights Residents' Association
- Quentin Vandermerwe: Downtown Residents' Association

### **Questions:**

#### **4. Are there other concerns or impacts related to homelessness that you would like to add?**

- It was noted that the Downtown is the most impacted neighbourhood with regard to homelessness. It was also noted that the unsheltered are considered residents, even though they are not housed. It was emphasized that there needs to be more work to inform businesses and residents that there is not a direct correlation between homelessness and crime and drug use.
- It was noted that there is a ripple effect from the Downtown to Quayside, and a need for intervention to also address this area too.
- It was noted that there is no visible homelessness in Victoria Hill; however, there are misconceptions about homelessness, including that the unsheltered are reluctant to work. It was stated that a communications campaign is needed to address these misconceptions.
- It was stated that not every unsheltered person wants to avail themselves of emergency shelter or supportive housing. Some do not want to abide by the rules, while others are limited by barriers to access.
- It was stated that homelessness is not an issue in Queen's Park, and that residents are removed from the situation; however, many are interested in helping out and just need to be made aware of the opportunities.

#### **5. What are your ideas or suggestions for addressing homelessness?**

- It was noted that there is a need for more affordable and non-market housing as opposed to temporary accommodation such as emergency shelters. It was also noted that change takes time and housing security is of the utmost importance. • It was noted that there is the political will to finding solutions to homelessness.
- It was suggested that a subsidy and support program be developed to place the unsheltered in existing rental housing, which would provide a more immediate response to addressing homelessness.
- It was suggested that partnerships be developed with local faith-based and non-profit

- organizations to assist the unsheltered to gain employment and life skills, and to address other underlying issues which may be contributing to their homelessness.
- It was noted that Houston Texas has been very successful in addressing homelessness through its rental assistance program which incentivizes landlords to provide accommodation to the unsheltered. It was also noted that this may be a promising practice worth exploring.
  - It was noted that access to laundry services, personal storage, public toilets and shower facilities are important for the unsheltered. Regarding public toilets, it was suggested that research be conducted on the public toilets located on Main Street and Terminal Avenue in Vancouver. More specifically, what has and has not worked, and what is applicable to New Westminster?

## **6. How can your association or membership be part of the solution?**

- It was suggested that there needs to be enhanced communication with the unsheltered as to available facilities, programs and services to meet their varied needs. It was also suggested that businesses and residents need to be informed as to how they can be part of the solution, including specific ideas to make a difference. Additionally, it was suggested that this information could be distributed through a notice board or newsletter, which would have to be regularly updated, and through resident association distribution groups.
- It was noted that residents need to be equipped with contact information so they can address issues without having to call the police non-emergency line. It was noted that the City has two vulnerable persons liaison officers, as well as a number of homeless outreach workers.
- It was suggested that the staff and students review the National At Home Report, which was a federally-funded, four-year project looking at the Housing First model. It was noted that it was highly successful in addressing homelessness:  
<https://www.homelesshub.ca/resource/national-homechez-soi-final-report>

## **Appendix K: Key Informant Interview Script: Businesses**

Thank you so much for taking the time to be here. We'll start off with some introductions. My name is [X] and I'm a second year student in the Master of Community and Regional Planning program at UBC.

My name is [X] and I am also a second year student in the Master of Community and Regional Planning program at UBC. I will be notetaking today.

We recognise and respect that New Westminster is on the unceded and unsurrendered land of the Halkomelem (hall-ko-ME-lem) speaking peoples. We acknowledge that colonialism has made invisible their histories and connections to the land. As a City, we are learning and building relationships with the people whose lands we are on.

You have been identified as a key informant with regard to informing the Homelessness Action Strategy, which will provide a five-year vision and plan for addressing homelessness. We would like to gain your insights on the homelessness situation in New Westminster, with particular reference to the specific population(s) that you serve (e.g., newcomers, women , youth, etc.). We would also like to gain your insights on the barriers to accessing services and the needs and gaps in service provision, as well as your ideas and suggestions for addressing homelessness. Over the next 30 minutes or so, we'll be discussing these topics using open-ended questions, but please feel free to suggest other avenues of inquiry. Are there any questions at this time about the purpose of today's session, or how the information that's gathered will be used?

1. How long have you been operating your business in New Westminster?
2. Why did you choose to operate your business in New Westminster?
3. Has your business been impacted by homelessness? If yes, in what ways?
4. What are your ideas and suggestions for addressing homelessness in New Westminster?
  - a. Are there actions that the business community or your own business can take?
5. How can the City assist or work with the business community to deal with homelessness, including its impacts?
  - a. Is there a need for better communication or information dissemination?
6. How do we create a more welcoming and receptive community for all, including those experiencing homelessness?
7. Do you have anything to add that we may not have covered?

Thank you so much for taking time to share your knowledge and insights with us. This information will be extremely helpful in informing the Homelessness Action Strategy. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us. We also want to invite you to attend a panel discussion and Q&A session on February 17 at 6:30pm. We will email you the details, as well.

## Key Informant Interview Script: Service Providers

Thank you so much for taking the time to be here. We'll start off with some introductions. My name is [X] and I'm a second year student in the Master of Community and Regional Planning program at UBC. *Personal land acknowledgement*

My name is [X] and I am also a second year student in the Master of Community and Regional Planning program at UBC. I will be notetaking today. *Personal land acknowledgement*

You have been identified as a key informant with regard to informing the Homelessness Action Strategy, which will provide a five-year vision and plan for addressing homelessness. We would like to gain your insights on the homelessness situation in New Westminster, with particular reference to the specific population(s) that you serve (e.g., newcomers, women, youth, etc.). We would also like to gain your insights on the barriers to accessing services and the needs and gaps in service provision, as well as your ideas and suggestions for addressing homelessness. Over the next 30 minutes or so, we'll be discussing these topics using open-ended questions, but please feel free to suggest other avenues of inquiry. Are there any questions at this time about the purpose of today's session, or how the information that's gathered will be used?

1. What factors do you think are contributing to increasing homelessness in Metro Vancouver?
2. What have been the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on those who are homeless, including the people you serve?
3. What services and supports for the homeless are most needed (but missing) in New Westminster?
  - a. What service or support would best address the needs of the people you serve?
4. What prevents those who are homeless from accessing services and supports?
  - a. What has your organization done to address barriers to access?
5. What are your ideas and suggestions for addressing homelessness?
  - a. What would you suggest be done in the short-term?
6. What is your organization most proud about in its efforts to address homelessness?
7. What would you suggest to address misconceptions and stereotypes about those who are homeless?
  - a. How do we create a more welcoming and receptive community?
8. What would you suggest as indicators of success in addressing homelessness?
9. Do you have anything to add that we may not have covered?

Thank you so much for taking time to share your knowledge and insights with us. This information will be extremely helpful in informing the Homelessness Action Strategy. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us. We also want to invite you to attend a panel discussion and Q&A session on February 17 at 6:30pm. We will email you the details, as well.

## Key Informant Interview Script: Individuals with Lived Experience of Homelessness

Thank you so much for taking the time to be here. We'll start off with some introductions. My name is [X] and I'm a second year student in the Master of Community and Regional Planning program at UBC. *Personal land acknowledgement*

My name is [X] and I am also a second year student in the Master of Community and Regional Planning program at UBC. I will be notetaking today. *Personal land acknowledgement*

You have been identified as a key informant with regard to informing the Homelessness Action Strategy, which will provide a five-year vision and plan for addressing homelessness. We would like to gain your insights on the homelessness situation in New Westminster, with particular reference to the specific population(s) that you serve (e.g., newcomers, women, youth, etc.). We would also like to gain your insights on the barriers to accessing services and the needs and gaps in service provision, as well as your ideas and suggestions for addressing homelessness. Over the next 30 minutes or so, we'll be discussing these topics using open-ended questions, but please feel free to suggest other avenues of inquiry. Are there any questions at this time about the purpose of today's session, or how the information that's gathered will be used?

1. Can you tell us a bit about the work you do?
  - a. What does your average day look like?
2. What are the main reasons you think people become homeless?
3. Do you have any concerns or impacts related to homelessness in New Westminster?
4. Can you tell us about the services that are currently offered in New Westminster that you think are essential and important for the homeless community?
5. What are the main barriers and obstacles for those experiencing homelessness to transition out of homelessness?
6. Do you have any ideas or suggestions for addressing homelessness in New Westminster?
  - a. If you had a blank cheque from the City of New Westminster, what are the top three things you would do to address homelessness in our city?
7. Do you have any suggestions for other individuals we should consult for this Strategy?
  - a. Are there any resources you recommend that we review?
8. Are you aware of any promising practices in other jurisdictions?
9. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank you so much for taking time to share your knowledge and insights with us. This information will be extremely helpful in informing the Homelessness Action Strategy. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us. We also want to invite you to attend a panel discussion and Q&A session on February 17 at 6:30pm. We will email you the details, as well.



## Appendix L:

### City of New Westminster Homelessness Action Strategy Key Informant Interviews

#### Questions:

#### 1. What factors do you think are contributing to increasing homelessness in Metro Vancouver?

- There was concern about unaffordability, particularly due to the rising cost of rent and utilities. Further, the lack of a living wage across the province was mentioned as a related issue.
- There was concern that services are underfunded. The loss of funding for outreach workers and the gaps in resources in Queensborough were mentioned as examples of this lack of funding.
- The lack of coordination among service providers across municipalities was mentioned as an issue. In particular, coordinated servicing would support individuals who are precariously housed, experiencing homelessness, or seeking pathways out of homelessness.
- The mounting opioid epidemic, and related drug toxicity, was mentioned as an aggravating factor.

#### 2. What have been the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on those who are homeless, including the people you serve?

- Non-profit and faith based service providers experienced reduced capacities to serve their clientele. This was in part due to public health regulations that limited capacities, and in part due to added barriers, such as changing regulations that were confusing to clients.
- The rise in domestic abuse associated with the pandemic contributed to rising numbers of victims facing homelessness, and as a result an increased number of individuals seeking support and services.
- Non-profit and faith-based service providers are struggling from a lack of staff and remaining staff are exhausted. There is also a lack of funding to replace unfilled positions as many organizations have run out of their emergency funds.
- The capacity of service providers
- Non-profit and faith-based service provider staff and their clients are feeling isolated. It can take weeks or months to build relationships with clients but, due to the aforementioned lack of staff and exhaustion, these relationships are more difficult to foster. This is also exacerbated by the amount of time staff spend on administrative tasks, and not with their clients.
- There is a lack of integrated and collaborative emergency response that combines the capacity of various resources in the city.

3. What services and supports for the homeless are most needed (but missing) in New Westminster?
- There is a need for additional shelter services to expand and improve availability, meet a diversity of needs, and be operational more hours of the day.
  - There is a need for additional supportive housing units to support individuals in their pathway out of homelessness.
  - There is a need for additional harm reduction sites that are operational more hours of the day and permit other methods of substance use.
  - There is a need for a hub for those experiencing homeless that can be co-managed by multiple service providers. This hub could provide a variety of services, such as resources and information, basic necessities (e.g. food, clothes), exchange resources, mental health supports, and facilitate access to monetary support.
  - There is a need for additional mental health support for those experiencing homelessness, with a particular focus on trauma. Existing resources, of which there are few, are not barrier-free. A case manager would be particularly helpful in coordinating this care.
  - There is a need for additional income and rent assistance programs as the existing ones are not meeting the need.
  - There is a need for a community kitchen where individuals experiencing homelessness can cook, learn to cook from others, and share meals.
  - There is a need for storage spaces (e.g. storage lockers) where individuals experiencing homelessness can store their belongings. These would ideally be located near or in existing service provider locations.
  - There is a need for services to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse homeless community (i.e. seniors, youth, non-English speakers).
  - There is a need to provide a more flexible interpretation of municipal bylaws for events and supports for the homeless community.
  - There is a need to clearly delineate the responsibility of the City and faith and non-profit service providers in administering services and supports to the homeless community. Funding a coordinator position to handle this was mentioned as a solution.
  - There is an interest to allow individuals experiencing homelessness to program for themselves (e.g. set up food gardens, facilitate swap meets).
4. **What prevents those who are homeless from accessing services and supports?**
- There is a stigma associated with individuals experiencing homelessness that often prevents them from accessing services and supports, particularly at health care facilities.
  - There can be lengthy waitlists for accessing services, particularly for addiction recovery programs. Individuals experiencing homelessness would benefit from accessing these services on-demand and as needed.
  - A lack of information often prevents individuals experiencing homelessness from accessing services and supports. In particular, the relationship between service

providers and the 211 line should be strengthened in order to ensure the homeless community is being directed to the right resources.

- The lack of translation and multicultural support means that individuals who do not speak English or need culturally-specific resources are not getting the help they need. Simplifying the language on resource documents was suggested as one way to alleviate this problem.

**5. What are your ideas and suggestions for addressing homelessness?**

- It was suggested that emergency shelter capacity be increased to meet the increasing demand on services.
- It was suggested that harm reduction sites be increased, and to either monitor inhalation visits or retrofit existing structures to allow for drug inhalation.
- It was suggested that aging in place concepts be explored to help seniors experiencing house precarity or homelessness.

**6. What is your organization most proud about in its efforts to address homelessness?**

- There was recognition that New Westminster is the only city outside of the Downtown Eastside with a permanent FTR Spectrometer for drug testing.
- There was recognition that a service provider partnered with BC housing on the creation of new housing for low-income families.
- There was recognition of the hundreds of volunteers throughout the city that have been generous and helpful, many of whom are experiencing homelessness themselves.

**7. What would you suggest to address misconceptions and stereotypes about those who are homeless?**

- It was suggested that the stigma associated with homelessness is a barrier for those accessing services, therefore addressing this stigma as crucial.
- It was suggested that expanding education and awareness of homelessness and related issues (i.e. mental health, substance addiction) that address misconceptions and stereotypes is critical.
- It was suggested that the Eyes on the Street Program be replicated in other contexts as it was celebrated among service providers for its ability to reintegrate individuals experiencing homelessness.
- It was suggested that education for individuals experiencing homelessness be implemented to build their capacities and empower them.

**8. What would you suggest as indicators of success in addressing homelessness?**

- It was suggested that indicators of success are unique to the service provider, and they would use these results to implement program changes and adapt their services accordingly (e.g. how many relationships were built).
- It was suggested that the number of individuals experiencing homelessness they are able to house and/or get access to services is an indicator of success.

## Appendix M:

### Homelessness Action Strategy Suggested Action Workshop

March 23, 2022

6:00pm-8:00pm

Based on the suggested action that we've heard from our engagements, please reflect on the following question in your small group.

*“From your perspective, what suggested actions are important to you, what additional information do you want to share, or what actions are missing and should definitely form part of the strategy?”*

5:45-6:00pm	<b>CAN leader arrival</b>	Arrival and getting food
6:00-6:10pm	<b>Welcome and Icebreaker</b>	Welcome everyone as we meet for the first time in person as a group! Q: What are you most excited about for the new season?
6:10-6:20pm	<b>Purpose of workshop &amp; engagements</b>	John will briefly reiterate why we are meeting. Emily will share a brief update on our engagements.
6:20-6:55pm	<b>Small Group Discussion</b>	Facilitator will review the suggested actions with their small group. This is an opportunity for reflection and to seek clarity.  Q: “From your perspective, what suggested actions are important to you, what additional information do you want to share, or what actions are missing and should definitely form part of the strategy?”  During the discussion, small group members will be encouraged to add comments, questions and suggestions using the post-it notes.
6:55-7:05pm	<b>Report Back to Large Group</b>	Each small group will do a report back, highlighting new and revised suggested actions.
7:05-7:40pm	<b>Smaller Group Discussion (Switch Topics)</b>	Facilitator will review the suggested actions with their small group. This is an opportunity for reflection and to seek clarity.  Q: “From your perspective, what suggested actions are important to you, what additional information do you want to share, or what actions are missing and should definitely form part of the strategy?”  During the discussion, small group members will be encouraged to add

		comments, questions and suggestions using the post-it notes.
7:40-7:50	<b>Report Back to Large Group</b>	Each small group will do a report back, highlighting new and revised suggested actions.
7:50-7:55	<b>General Observations and Next Steps</b>	John will seek general observations and share next steps.
7:55-8:00pm	<b>Close</b>	Emily will close the session

Logistics Coordinator: Emily, Anur

**Group 1**

- **Facilitator: John**
- Joanne
- Richard
- Sandra
- Sharon
- William

**Group 2**

- **Facilitator: Emily**
- Anur
- Grace
- Kelly
- Lama
- Natalie
- Zoe

**Appendix N:**  
**Homelessness Action Strategy**  
**March 23 Workshop with CAN Leaders**  
**Suggested Actions – Comments and Suggestions**

The following are draft suggested actions based on the engagement and research to date. They have been grouped according to the following categories:

- Coordination and Implementation
- Prevention of Homelessness
- Provision of Services and Supports / Emergency Interventions
- Pathways Out of Homelessness / Permanent Response
- Engaging Businesses and Residents, and Addressing their Concerns.

In some cases, organizations have been identified; however, this will change and evolve based on the feedback received.

In determining which suggested actions will form part of the Homelessness Action Strategy, consideration will be given as to ability to:

- address identified needs and gaps;
- City budgetary implications;
- community fit or livability (i.e., impacts on businesses and residents);
- jurisdiction issues (i.e., responsible level of government); and, political sensitivities.

### **Coordination and Implementation**

- That the City and Homelessness Coalition Society take primary responsibility for the implementation of the Homelessness Action Strategy.
- That the City and Homelessness Coalition Society engage people with lived and living experience of homelessness in the implementation of the strategy.
- That the Homelessness Coalition Society meet on a more frequent basis (e.g., bi-monthly), and that it expand its membership, including by people with lived and living experience of homelessness.
- That the City advocate that the Province mandate municipalities to have Homelessness Plans (similar to Housing Needs Reports) and that Regional Districts

be given more responsibility for the coordination of such plans across municipalities, including tying senior government funding decisions to municipal responsiveness.

- Others ...

### **Prevention of Homelessness**

- That the City, in partnership with the Tenant Resource and Advisory Centre, hold tenant education and information sessions, which speak to legal protections and rights, and address the needs of specific groups such as newcomers, persons with disabilities, and seniors.
- That the City continue to fund the administrative costs of the New Westminster Rent Bank Program.
- That the City and The Lower Mainland Purpose Society advocate for continued senior government funding for the New West Rent Bank Program in order to enhance access to and eligibility for loans, and to ensure that the amounts provided reflect the true cost of rents.
- That the Community Poverty Reduction Committee and the Homelessness Coalition Society work with mainstream financial institutions to develop and/or promote short-term, low-interest loan products.
- Others ...

### **Comments and Suggestions:**

- Advocate for information in plain accessible language that is understandable
- Capital funding for rent bank, loans, grants
- Mental health services, prevention
  - Enhanced access
  - Social worker navigation
- Youth advocate, transition
  - Care Ontario Tenant assistance
- Update the City's renovation Bylaw
- COVID benefit assistance ended, can there be other income assistance?
- Ensure a hand up not hand out deal with underlying issues.
- I like the specificity for different groups of people
- Look into accessibility of rent bank
- Rent bank has a lot of red tape
- The Rent bank application process is invasive

## **Pathways Out of Homelessness / Permanent Response**

- That the City continue to advance “social benefit” zoning, such that social benefit land uses are permitted “as of right,” either across the city, in certain geographic areas, or within specific zones, and that it include lands leased or owned by faith-based and non-profit organizations.
- That the City continue to fund and provide land and staffing support for the provision of supportive and non-market housing.
- That the City work with the senior levels of government to realize 358 supportive housing units and 2,083 non-market housing units between 2021 and 2031.
- That the City advocate that the Ministry of Children and Family Development fund a Youth Safe House in New Westminster. (This would ensure that youth remain connected to formal and informal supports in the community.)
- That the City advocate that BC Housing, possibly in conjunction with the Seniors Services Society or other senior serving organizations, provide supportive housing specifically for unsheltered seniors (55+) and persons living with disabilities, which would be fully accessible and staffed by workers with specific training related to ageing and gerontology. **Aging in place**
- That the City advocate to the Province for a subsidy and support program to place the unsheltered in existing market rental housing, which would provide a more immediate response to addressing homelessness.
- Others ...

### **Comments and suggestions**

- Live in group homes with supports
- Shelter portion of income assistance (\$375) needs to be increased
- Require life skills training to support transition from one housing type to another.  
Ex: training in cooking meals, financial literacy, etc.
  - Often individuals who leave shelters to their own independent housing will return since everything is provided for and taken care of at shelters.

## **Engaging Businesses and Residents, and Addressing Their Concerns**

- That the City, in partnership with the Homelessness Coalition Society and Douglas College, and building on the Arts Empowerment and Social Change Project, implement an anti-stigma program to address misinformation and stereotypes regarding the unsheltered, and to build empathy and receptivity for interventions, including supportive and non-market housing, to address the needs of the unsheltered.



- Suggested that the program should be led by individuals with lived and living experience
  - Consider partnership with Arts Societies based in New West
  - It was noted that it's important to expand on the faces of homelessness.
  - It was highlighted that people should be allowed to share their stories directly
  - Recordings is an approach to show the power of stories. Stories bring us together.
- That the Homelessness Coalition Society develop a "how to make a difference" brochure in which businesses and residents can address homelessness (e.g., advocating for additional services and supports, making a donation, raising awareness about the issue, volunteering at a program, etc.).
    - Question on what if info and contact on brochure changes?
    - Suggestion for separate brochures to businesses and residents as they might have separate concerns and inquiries.
  - That the New Westminster Chamber of Commerce develop a new category under its Platinum Awards to publicly recognize businesses that are making a difference in addressing homelessness and other social issues.
  - That the City develop and staff an after-hours non-emergency line where businesses and residents can share and receive a response to their concerns, including possible follow-up action if deemed appropriate. (This would reduce demand on the police non-emergency line and reduce frustration amongst businesses and residents.)
    - Supported by community based liaison
  - That the City, through Economic Development and Community Planning, regularly update businesses and residents about efforts to address homelessness and other social issues, and that it provide a forum, possibly through 'Be Heard New West,' for feedback.
    - It was noted that there was interest in setting up more public forum lecture series.
  - Others ...

#### Comments and suggestions:

- Working with big businesses (i.e.: Save on Foods, Walmart, Safeway) to support job training and employment (i.e.: with newcomers) and relationship building with nonprofit supporting the unsheltered.
- Distinguish between homeless and houseless
- Suggestion to explore the pay it forward program
- It was noted that mental health services should be expanded
- It was noted that life skills should be emphasized

- It was noted that informing people on what progress has been made should include the unsheltered
- It was suggested that there should be dialogue with people who were unsheltered and ask them what is working or not working.
- It was noted that there could be lessons learned from the Carnegie system of food security.
- Food should be culturally sensitive and nutritious
- It was noted that people should be able to make decisions about food
- It was noted that there should be a healthy food credit system
- There should be plain language that is accessible and non triggering
- It was suggested that we should look at the Prince Edward Island Rental Program where it ties rent to the unit, not market.
- It was noted that tenant rights are important
- It was noted that the province should try to control rent

## **Provision of Services and Supports / Emergency Interventions**

### ***Emergency Shelter and Temporary Housing***

The City would advocate for the following:

- That BC Housing continue to fund existing extreme weather and emergency shelter beds and that it monitor and respond to the need for such beds, including related to specific population groups of the unsheltered.
- That BC Housing expand provision of transition and second stage housing for women and children fleeing abusive situations. (There is a need to be more specific as to the actual increase in beds.)
- That BC Housing cover the cost of storage containers for the secure accommodation of larger items when the unsheltered are accessing extreme weather and emergency shelter facilities.
- That BC Housing permit and make provision for the accommodation of pets at extreme weather and emergency shelter facilities, or in partnership with the New Westminster Animal Shelter.
- That the Ministry of Children and Family Development fund a Youth Safe House in New Westminister. (This would ensure that youth remain connected to their formal and informal support networks in the community.)

### **Comments and suggestions:**

- Food security should also focus on people having the ability to make food choices for themselves.
  - For example, City of Vancouver hires staff to buy healthy food for Carnegie Hall so that people can buy meals at a low cost
- It was noted that life skills training is important so that individuals know how to live on their own when they move out of shelters. It was also raised whether shelter staff assess individuals when they return from independent housing. Shelters shouldn't just provide free things, but life skills too.
- It was raised that shelters should explore how to make the environment more safe, especially for groups who don't feel comfortable in shelters.
- What if individuals want to stay in tent communities? Can we make tent communities safer or replicate a similar community atmosphere and give individuals power within the shelter environment?
- It was noted that couples should have the ability to stay together in one shelter
- It was questioned whether emergency shelters also have safe inhalation sites
- It was questioned whether faith based and non profit providers can provide storage shelters
- Storage facilities should be accessible even to people not accessing extreme weather and emergency shelter facilities.

### ***Drop-In, Health and Hygiene Services***

- That the City advocate to the Province to fund a 24/7 drop-in and resource centre in the Downtown, which would provide access to emergency food, information and supports, and laundry, shower, and toilet facilities.
- That low-barrier, non-judgmental health services be available to the unsheltered in settings which are welcoming and familiar and with organizations that have a relationship and trust. (Follow-up with regard to the status of the Multidisciplinary Health Clinic at the Cliff Block, which is operated by Lookout Housing and Health Society, and the Purpose Society Clinic at 40 Begbie Street.)
- That the City expand availability of toilet facilities for the unsheltered, including through enhanced access to civic facilities, partnerships with faith-based and non-profit organizations, and provision of free-standing, pre-fabricated toilets. (It was noted that this is a dignity and human rights issue, and that the increasing presence of human waste is a major issue for businesses and residents.)
- That Fraser Health fund expanded hours (i.e., from 7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.) for the Health Contact Centre, which provides witnessed consumption and other harm reduction services.

- That the City advocate that Fraser Health fund an inhalation site as part of the Health Contact Centre, or at another site in conjunction with the Centre.
- That the City, through Fire and Rescue Services, and with funding support from Fraser Health, partner with a non-profit organization on an Opioid Response Pilot Project, which would provide follow-up, support and referral after an overdose event.
- That the City advocate that Fraser Health fund evening hours (i.e., from 4:30 p.m. to 10:00 or 11:00 p.m.) for the recently formed Integrated Response Team, which is supporting the sheltered and unsheltered with mental health issues.

#### **Comments and suggestions:**

- A question was raised on whether there is a centralized coordinated database for all non-profits and health clinics.
- It was noted that access to mental health has a long wait list
- It was noted that a community kitchen and capacity building for cooking is important
- It was noted that outdoor toilets for the homeless is important

#### **Food Security and Meal Programming**

- That the City and Homelessness Coalition Society commence work on a new Food Security Action Plan, which addresses increasing rates of food insecurity and escalating food prices, and that they explore foundation and senior government funding to cover costs related to its development, implementation and sustainability.

#### **Comments and suggestions:**

- Nutritional meal information is important
- Preparing culturally appropriate food is important
- It was noted that people shouldn't be made to line up, but rather it should be discreet
- It was noted that we should reference Carnegie Centre cafeteria in DTES
- It was noted that there should be a healthy food credit system where people have a credit card and can only buy healthy food
- The Food Security Action Plan should be informed by individuals with lived and living experience of homelessness with food security
- It was suggested that there should be a food program that buys wholesale bulk food and sells it in smaller portions without profit
- There should be multiple language assistance

### **Information and Resources**

- That the City continue to prepare and update the Financial Supports Bulletin, Food Resources Calendar and Survival Guide, and that it explore new ways to communicate this information, including through community notice boards and QR codes.
- That the City provide access to a free phone line at City Hall, and that it continue to partner with Douglas College and Purpose Society on digital inclusion initiatives, including the distribution of smart phones and computers, enhanced access to Wi-Fi, installation of charging stations, and provision of education and training.

### **Comments and suggestions:**

- What if people don't feel comfortable going to City Hall?
- It was suggested that there should be a website with all information on it, and staff updates it regularly. Organizations can also submit content and update it bi-weekly.

### **Enforcement, Outreach, Referral and Advocacy Services**

- That the City advocate for additional senior government funding to augment homeless outreach, referral and advocacy services, and that the services be tailored to address the specific needs of different population groups of the unsheltered, including related to newcomers, seniors, women, and youth.
- That the City, through Police or Integrated Services, create a Vulnerable Persons Liaison Officer Team who would work in conjunction with non-profit outreach workers to address homelessness and other social issues. (This would employ a problem-solving as opposed to enforcement approach.)
- That the City expand bylaw enforcement hours, including during evenings and weekends, and that there be enhanced communication with businesses and residents.

### **Comments and suggestions:**

- It was noted that 'enforcement' should be replaced with another word. Regulation?

### **Supported Employment Programming**

- That the City advocate that the Province place greater emphasis on supported work programs for the unsheltered, and that businesses be compensated or incentivized to provide supported employment opportunities. (For this to work, it was noted that workers would need to secure stable housing.)

- That the City and Homelessness Coalition Society realize sustainable funding for the “I’s on the Street” micro-street cleaning program, and that it explore related initiatives that engage the unsheltered, provide supported employment opportunities, and address business and resident concerns related to homelessness and other social issues.

**Comments and suggestions:**

- It was noted that there should be sustainable employment after funding
- It was suggested that there should be supported training programs
- It was suggested that non profits can partner with businesses for employment programming
- It was noted that the City advocate that the Province place greater emphasis on supported sustainable work programs for the unsheltered...

**Emergency Planning and Preparation**

- That the City, through Fire and Rescue Services and Community Planning, develop an emergency preparedness plan with the active involvement of vulnerable populations, including the unsheltered.
  - It was noted that emergency preparedness plan needs to include climate equity and analysis, as well as map out the most vulnerable areas.
  - It was noted that the plan needs to meet the needs of different groups (seniors, those with disability, and youth)
- That the City advocate for senior government funding to support the operation of warming and cooling centres for the unsheltered during extreme weather events, and that this funding also cover the costs of retrofitting and equipping facilities for this purpose (e.g., installation of air conditioning systems, purchase of space heaters, etc.).
  - It was noted that this also requires specialized staff support

**Comments and suggestions:**

- It was noted that we should work with Red Cross and other organizations during extreme heat events to hand out water bottles

**Frontline Worker Remuneration, Training and Education**

- That education and training be provided to front-line workers with regard to cultural sensitivity, entitlement and unconscious bias to ensure that all groups, including

Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), Indigenous and LGBTQ2S+ community members, feel welcome, comfortable and safe.

- That the City and the Homelessness Coalition Society advocate to the Province for enhanced protections, remuneration and training for front-line workers who staff drop-in centres, emergency shelters and supportive housing sites, and provide outreach and support to the unsheltered. (Service providers have reported increasing challenges in recruiting and retaining staff, which is negatively impacting programs, services and supports for the unsheltered.)
  - It was suggested that we should create a list of businesses who are interested in hiring homeless individuals

### **Other**

- That the City advocate that the Ministry of Children and Family Development provide additional support, including housing, and bridging services for youth aging out of care.
  - It was noted that CAN leaders can be the bridge for youth aging out of care
- That the Homelessness Coalition identify veterinarians that are willing to provide pro bono veterinarian services to pets of unsheltered persons, possibly as part of homeless connect days, and pet stores and suppliers that are willing to provide free pet food.
  - It was noted that the unsheltered want to be informed through more communication
  - Ensure CAN leaders are engaged