

# Somewhere to Go

Exploring Day Programming & Service Models for  
Unsheltered Community Members in Burnaby



**HHBC Consulting**

City of Burnaby

UBC SCARP

# WHOSE LAND ARE WE ON?

To recognize that we are located on the traditional unceded territory of the xʷməθkʷə́yəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətaʔɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations is simply the first step for settler communities today.

Western Planning as we know it is built on stolen land, private property, and the financialization of housing. Every day, these notions actively contribute to the ongoing dispossession of land and displacement of Indigenous peoples and their communities.

While **Somewhere to Go** has been made possible through the ongoing guidance of Indigenous peoples, along with the commitment to reconciliation by the City of Burnaby and University of British Columbia's School of Community and Regional Planning (SCARP), we recognize that this work is simply not good enough without a firm commitment to Land Back.



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# THE PROBLEM

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As wages remain stagnant for people and populations continue to grow, all while the cost of rental housing skyrockets across communities, it's important to ask *who's experiencing homelessness?*

The stark reality is that social determinants of health are increasingly creating complexities in people accessing stable, affordable housing for more people than ever before. Further, while populations grow, populations continue to age without adequate care in place.

With this, what are clear solutions to some become wicked problems to others.

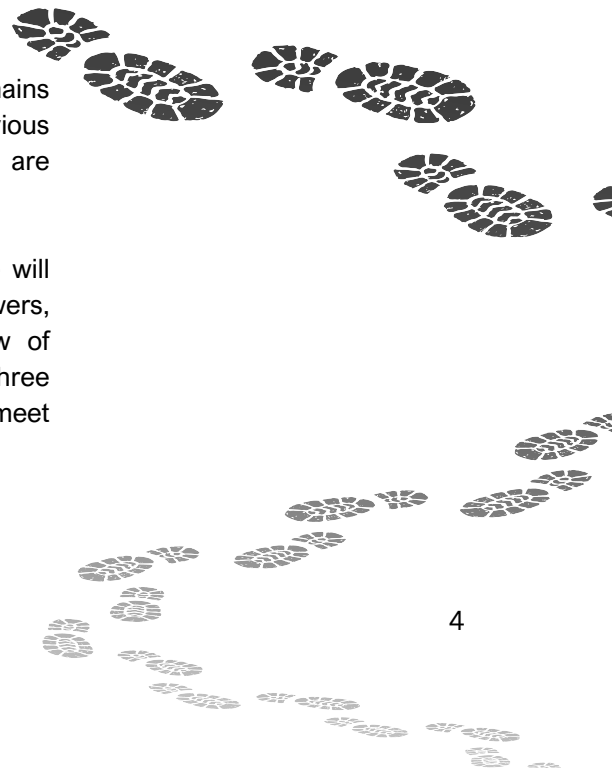
"Somewhere to Go" builds on the City of Burnaby's "HOME: Housing and Homelessness Strategy" and the 2024 Council-endorsed "Mayor's Taskforce Report on Unsheltered Community Members" to provide a practical and realistic pathway for the City of Burnaby to actualize its thirteenth report recommendation: **to explore provisions of day programming, services to be provided, as well as advice for location, and funding models** -- so that unsheltered community members can begin the crucial step towards accessing stable housing now and into the future.

This report begins by framing this seemingly wicked problem through the perspectives of all levels of governments, asking *whose problem is this?* followed by taking a closer look at the known demographics of the unsheltered community in Burnaby.

To get to the bottom of this problem, we have utilized case studies, current literature, carried out a spatial analysis of Burnaby and conducted community engagement with current day program operators and municipal actors.

While the face of homelessness continues to change and the future remains uncertain for many, we know that some actions are perhaps more obvious than others. We also know that funding patterns and political tides, too, are changing.

By applying our findings to the context of Burnaby as we know it, we will outline six key recommendations for day programming: meals, showers, laundry, engagement, design and practice, followed by an overview of location practices and funding pathways; concluding with a proposal of three approaches for the City of Burnaby to have a concrete path forward to meet unsheltered community members where they're at.





# WHOSE PROBLEM IS IT?

## THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

The federal government's primary role in addressing homelessness is to provide funding and lead national strategies. In 2017, the National Housing Strategy (NHS) - an \$82 billion, 10-year plan was launched to improve housing affordability, reduce homelessness, and support vulnerable populations (Atkey et al., 2022). This national framework aims to ensure that all Canadians have access to safe and affordable housing (Atkey et al., 2022). However, reports across the country indicate that the housing crisis is not improving, particularly in B.C., with Metro Vancouver being named the eviction capital of Canada -- while homelessness becomes an increasingly alarming issue, holding the attention of all levels of governments (Wytton, 2023).

To tackle homelessness specifically, the NHS funds programs that create affordable housing, support shelters and services like day programs, and provide long-term housing solutions (Atkey et al., 2022). A key initiative within the NHS is Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy, which provides funding to municipalities, Indigenous organizations, and local service providers to support community-based efforts to reduce homelessness (Atkey et al., 2022). Additionally, the federal government collaborates with provinces and territories through Bilateral Agreements under the NHS, administered by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, n.d.). These agreements allow provinces and territories to tailor housing and homelessness programs to regional needs while ensuring that federal investments align with local strategies (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, n.d.).

Provinces also develop their own homelessness strategies, such as "Belonging in BC" in British Columbia, using federal funding to implement supportive housing, homelessness prevention programs, and outreach services (Government of British Columbia, 2025). Some initiatives specifically focus on Indigenous homelessness, such as Reaching Home: Indigenous Homelessness Stream, which provides funding for Indigenous-led housing and culturally appropriate services (Employment and Social Development Canada, n.d.). These programs ensure that Indigenous organizations can lead solutions that address the unique challenges faced by Indigenous people experiencing homelessness (Employment and Social Development Canada, n.d.).

At the municipal level, both federal and provincial governments provide funding to municipalities and non-profit organizations, which then deliver direct services, including emergency shelters, supportive housing, and mental health services. An example of this joint funding in Burnaby was seen in August 2021, when the city received \$1,233,375 in joint provincial and federal funding to support individuals experiencing homelessness, as well as women and children fleeing violence (Campbell, 2021). This funding was allocated to establish a "homeless hub" drop-in centre, providing a safe space for unsheltered individuals to access services, programming, and social connections (Campbell, 2021). Additional initiatives included cooling stations during extreme heat events, a shower program, and the appointment of a housing support worker dedicated to assisting women and children escaping violence (Campbell, 2021). However, it is important to note that although these funding structures are essential, municipalities and service providers face challenges due to the need for long-term, predictable funding rather than short-term grants (Atkey et al., 2022). This funding issue is highlighted by the fact that many day programs and support services struggle to maintain operations once initial federal funding runs out (Atkey et al., 2022).





# WHOSE PROBLEM IS IT?

## THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT

Provinces play a critical role in addressing homelessness through funding, policy regulation, and social service delivery (Atkey et al., 2022). In 2022, British Columbia launched the Belonging in BC initiative, a provincial strategy aimed at preventing and reducing homelessness, with federal funding support (Union of British Columbia Municipalities, 2025). The initiative's goal is to make homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring, guided by four key strategies: reducing barriers to support services, strengthening community partnerships, incorporating diverse perspectives, and using data-driven policy development (Union of British Columbia Municipalities, 2025). The initiative is led by multiple provincial ministries, including those overseeing housing, social services, healthcare, mental health, and Indigenous-led solutions (Government of British Columbia, n.d.). These ministries collaborate with BC Housing, municipalities, and nonprofits to deliver homeless services, emergency shelters, supportive housing, and permanent affordable housing (Government of British Columbia, n.d.). To support these efforts, the province has committed \$633 million over three years, with an additional \$1.5 billion in Budget 2023 to expand programs (Union of British Columbia Municipalities, 2025).

For day programs serving individuals experiencing homelessness, BC Housing is the primary agency responsible for funding and oversight, providing financial support to non-profit organizations that operate supportive housing facilities, outreach programs, and day programs (BC Housing, n.d.). In Burnaby, certain homeless outreach programs receive funding from BC Housing (BC Housing, n.d.). For instance, the Progressive Housing Society operates the Homeless Outreach Program (HOP) in Burnaby, which is a drop-in day program that assists individuals experiencing homelessness by providing essentials like food, clothing, and guidance on securing permanent housing (Progressive Housing Society, n.d.).

Day program funding and oversight are also shared across multiple ministries under the Belonging in BC initiative's Integrated Support Framework (ISF)—a collaborative model designed to create a more effective and accessible system of support (Government of British Columbia, 2023). The Ministry of Housing oversees housing policies and homelessness initiatives, working alongside other ministries and agencies (Government of British Columbia, 2022). The Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction focuses on poverty reduction and social support services, partnering with BC Housing to fund services for unsheltered individuals like day programs (Government of British Columbia, 2025). The Ministry of Health works with health authorities like Fraser Health to integrate healthcare services within supportive housing and day programs (Government of British Columbia, 2023). Lastly, the Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions plays a crucial role in delivering mental health and addiction services, which are essential components of day programs for individuals with complex health needs (Government of British Columbia, 2023).

Through inter-ministerial collaboration, BC Housing, and partnerships with nonprofits, the BC government plays a significant role in the provision, funding, and oversight of day programs and support services for individuals experiencing homelessness in British Columbia. However, it is important to note that on the provincial level, more collaboration with municipalities to understand the needs of communities is needed to ensure funding and resources are appropriately allocated so that individuals experiencing homelessness have access to essential services (Atkey et al., 2022).



# WHOSE PROBLEM IS IT?

## PROVINCIAL HEALTH AUTHORITIES

Fraser Health also plays a vital role in addressing the homelessness crisis. In particular, Fraser Health is responsible for providing health services, including specialized teams, and collaborating with partners to provide housing and wrap-around care. Fraser Health has Integrated Homelessness Action Response Teams (IHART) which are comprised of nurses, social workers, outreach support workers, peer support workers, and mental health clinicians to offer low barrier, culturally safe, wrap-around care. IHART is designed to help individuals who experience high rates of hospitalizations and emergency room visits, do not have access to a health care team, have challenges with overall health, experience mental health and substance use struggles, experience homelessness, unsheltered or precariously housed, living in shelters, and those who are living in encampments. Burnaby is one of several municipalities within the region that have a local IHART.

Complex care housing is a program provided by Fraser Health as part of the Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions' initiative to help individuals who are at risk of or are experiencing homelessness. The purpose of complex care housing is to meet people where they are at and to support them in ways they feel would serve them the best. The program offers a cross-section of health services, integrated into one team. As part of the program, health care, social services, and non-profit housing providers offer wrap-around care to those who are aged 19 years and older, and who are experiencing mental health and/or substance misuse and other health needs. Complex care housing services are offered seven days a week and are culturally responsive. Programming is done in with a harm reduction approach that allows for personal choices, natural supports, and diverse cultures and lifestyles. The main components of complex care housing support include medication management support, psychosocial rehabilitation supports, Indigenous-specific services, recreational and leisure activities, and life skills support and skill development. There are a variety of staff workers that are part of complex care housing, such as nurses, social workers, occupational therapists, health care workers, peer support workers, and psychiatrists.

Fraser Health offers Intensive Case Management (ICM) teams to support those experiencing severe substance use, and mental illness and homelessness. Teams are comprised of clinicians, nurse practitioners, addiction physicians, psychiatrists, and housing outreach workers. These staff members work with individuals to provide them with resources to secure and maintain housing, address substance use, treat mental illness, and focus on general health and other needs to stabilize their lives. The ICM team employs a Housing First approach in offering recovery-oriented services that hone in on client engagement, housing stability, and brokering services. The ICM teams assist individuals in the private rental market and work closely with community partners, such as BC Housing to address homelessness through shelters, rental subsidies, the homeless outreach program, and the homeless prevention program. ICM teams also work with the support system of individuals, including family members to come up with a plan to improve the quality of life of the individuals. ICM teams offer comprehensive assessment, treatment, rehabilitation, and support activities that can include housing brokerage and support, assessing need for and facilitating access to medical care (primary care, dental care, and specialist care), substance use counselling and access to treatment, life skills support/skill building, grocery shopping with staff, social and recreational events, accessing vocational rehabilitation support, connecting the individual to community resources, transporting/accompanying clients to appointments, connecting clients to income assistance services, assisting clients to manage their medication, and supporting and encouraging healthy lifestyle choices, personal hygiene, short and long term goal setting, and money management.



# WHOSE PROBLEM IS IT?

## THE MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

Municipal governments significantly address homelessness by delivering essential services, coordinating housing initiatives, and advocating for funding to support unhoused individuals (Atkey et al., 2022). As the level of government closest to communities, municipalities are responsible for implementing local strategies that align with provincial and federal policies while tailoring responses to the unique needs of their residents (Atkey et al., 2022). Additionally, municipalities collaborate with non-profit organizations, health authorities, and other stakeholders to provide wraparound services that help individuals transition out of homelessness and into stable housing (Atkey et al., 2022). They also play a key role in securing and allocating funding, applying for grants, and advocating for policies that address service gaps (Atkey et al., 2022).

In terms of direct services, the City of Burnaby is in charge of opening emergency shelters during periods of extreme weather and supports several shelters and supportive housing facilities, including **Progressive Housing Emergency Shelter**, a 40-bed facility providing 24/7 support and connections to community-based services to assist individuals in transitioning to permanent housing (Progressive Housing Society, n.d.). Burnaby also collaborates with organizations like the **Society to End Homelessness in Burnaby** through its Task Force to End Homelessness, which includes members from homeless-serving agencies, law enforcement, financial institutions, and health authorities (City of Burnaby, 2022). This task force works to address the causes of homelessness, raise awareness, and provide support services (City of Burnaby, 2022).

Moreover, Burnaby has taken a proactive approach to tackling homelessness through strategic planning and targeted initiatives. One of the city's key efforts is HOME: Burnaby's Housing and Homelessness Strategy, a 10-year plan to improve housing security and reduce homelessness (City of Burnaby, 2022). This strategy aligns with provincial and federal initiatives to make homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring by expanding housing solutions and support services (City of Burnaby, 2022). Recognizing the complexity of homelessness, the city also established the Mayor's Task Force on Unsheltered Community Members to address the diverse challenges faced by unhoused individuals, including mental and physical disabilities, substance use, and histories of trauma (City of Burnaby, 2024). Among the Task Force's recommendations, the thirteenth recommendation highlights the urgent need to expand day programming in Burnaby (City of Burnaby, 2024). Day programs serve as low-barrier access points that provide essential services, stability, and pathways to housing for precariously housed individuals (City of Burnaby, 2024). These programs offer access to necessities, harm reduction services, employment resources, and social support, making them a critical component of Burnaby's homelessness response (City of Burnaby, 2024). Expanding these programs will strengthen the city's efforts to support vulnerable populations and ensure a more inclusive and supportive community. This report will further examine and expand on the Task Force's recommendation, emphasizing the importance of day programs in Burnaby's broader homelessness strategy and their role in creating long-term stability for individuals in need.

# THE “UNSHELTERED”

## DEMOGRAPHIC SNAPSHOT

According to the City of Burnaby's The Mayor's Task Force on Unsheltered Community Members report and the 2023 Point-in-Time (PiT) Homeless Count in Metro Vancouver, the number of people experiencing homelessness in Burnaby increased significantly, rising from 124 in 2020 to 209 in 2023, representing a 69% increase (City of Burnaby, 2024). Among these individuals, 77 were unsheltered, 92 resided in shelters, 14 used emergency warming shelters, and 26 reported having no permanent residence (City of Burnaby, 2024). However, while the PiT count is a valuable tool for tracking homelessness trends, it has limitations. It only captures homelessness at a single point in time, likely underestimating the total number of people experiencing homelessness throughout the year. Additionally, it does not account for hidden homelessness, which includes individuals lacking stable housing who may not be visibly homeless, such as those couch surfing, living in overcrowded conditions, or staying in temporary accommodations without secure tenure (City of Burnaby, 2024). The City of Burnaby's HOME Report estimates that at least 430 individuals experience either counted or hidden homelessness in the city (City of Burnaby, 2022). Understanding hidden homelessness is crucial, as these individuals often lack access to traditional support services and remain undercounted, highlighting the need for low-barrier daytime services that provide essential resources and an entryway to aid (City of Burnaby, 2022).

The primary causes of homelessness in Burnaby are broad and multifaceted. Insufficient income and rising housing costs are frequently cited as key factors, alongside substance use disorders and mental health challenges, which significantly impact housing stability (City of Burnaby, 2024). Additionally, certain populations are disproportionately affected by homelessness. The Mayor's Task Force report identifies Indigenous individuals, seniors, and youth aging out of care as particularly vulnerable (City of Burnaby, 2024).

Indigenous people are severely overrepresented, comprising 27% of Burnaby's homeless population despite making up only 1.5% of the city's total population (Vanderdeen, 2024). Regarding seniors, HOME: Burnaby's Housing and Homelessness Strategy highlights that this group is growing faster and will require specialty resources including health support to be added to service models (City of Burnaby, 2022). Additionally, HOME highlights that many youth with a history in the child welfare system struggle to secure stable housing when they turn 19, which is having a significant impact on mental health and well-being of this demographic, as well as the ability of youth to pursue post-secondary education (City of Burnaby, 2022).

Middle-aged men are also disproportionately represented in daytime service usage (City of Burnaby, 2022) while men constitute the majority of the homeless population, women and gender-diverse individuals face unique challenges. Women experiencing homelessness are at greater risk of violence and exploitation, and many experience hidden homelessness, making them less visible in official counts (City of Burnaby, 2022). In 2019 in Burnaby alone, 1,300 women and children fleeing violence were turned away from housing services in 2019 due to lack of space (City of Burnaby, 2022, p.33). Additionally, LGBTQ+ individuals often feel unsafe accessing shelters and support services, largely due to the overrepresentation of men in these spaces, according to insights collected by the Mayor's Task Force report (City of Burnaby, 2024). Families experiencing homelessness are also a growing concern, as the HOME strategy highlights, stating that families facing homelessness “often leave Burnaby and their support network because we have nothing to offer them” (City of Burnaby, 2024, p.14).

These demographic insights underscore the complex and multifaceted nature of homelessness in Burnaby. Moreover, they highlight the need for support and intervention strategies that begin with developing low-barrier daytime services in the City of Burnaby.

# WHAT IS BURNABY ASKING FOR?

## DAY PROGRAMMING AND SERVICE MODELS

Below is a combined summary of findings from Burnby's HOME: Housing and Homelessness Strategy, as well as the Mayor's Taskforce Report on Unsheltered Community Members, alongside offerings from City staff:

- to include a data-driven approach to housing;
- to provide an integrated outreach service that focuses on more than just housing an individual, but focuses on physical and mental health programs, financial advice, employment guidance, and educational opportunities;
- the need for a single agency to lead the coordination and oversight of the outreach response for unsheltered people in Burnaby;
- that members of the unsheltered community benefit significantly from daytime programming at a site that provides basic needs like meals and hygiene services;
- to support the creation of peer support opportunities to enhance supports for those experiencing homelessness; and
- the need to evaluate the model of services that used to be provided by the Hub in Burnaby
- to understand current programs in other communities with the same or similar urban environment features, as well as the applicable context of natural environment, demographics, and culture

## FOR JUST ABOUT EVERYONE

- Indigenous Peoples
- Seniors
- Youth aging out of care
- Middle-aged men
- Women fleeing violence
- 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals
- Families



# OUR WORK

## CASE STUDIES

Case Studies were used to investigate other municipalities and the work that they have carried out to successfully provide day servicing and programming for unsheltered community members.

Originally, the Case Studies focused on several municipalities, including: Victoria, British Columbia; Calgary, Alberta; New York, New York; and Portland, Oregon. While these municipalities selected by HHBC are comparable to Burnaby in natural environment, housing needs and precarity, they also provided an understanding of issues facing people in the North American context by lending itself to similar local and social cultures.

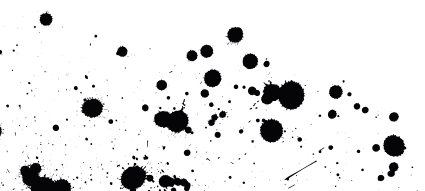
Further, these Case Studies provided insight into the implications of providing certain services at day programs, as well as funding models that do or do not sustain long-term service. Further, these Case Studies informed our Literature Review and Spatial Analysis by assisting us in providing Burnaby with recommendations in terms of locations for day programs and services, as well as shaped our Community Engagement.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The Literature Review took shape through two avenues: reading materials available through the City of Burnaby, as well as academic articles that explore the theorization and spatialization of unsheltered community members' needs. In doing this, we conducted an analysis of Housing Needs in Burnaby, as well as traced the work done by the City to address these needs to, then using traditional literature to gain a broader understanding of approaches to these issues to date. We then carved out information that could be applied to the actualization of a day program in Burnaby for unsheltered community members.

## SPATIAL ANALYSIS

Using readily available tools, such as Google Maps and MyMaps, we created a map of the City of Burnaby based on information that was publicly available to us, and knowledge gained from meetings with City of Burnaby staff. Utilizing this map, we identified a list of possible locations that best met our secondary and primary findings. From here, we developed "lessons" for the City of Burnaby to look to when selecting a site for a day program. Further, based on our own findings, we developed a list of six lots within the City to consider.





## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Born out of City of Burnaby's past Stakeholder Engagement and with feedback from City staff on our interim report, a list of stakeholders and questions was finalized based on a desire to further understand the following:

- The needs of unsheltered people in the Lower Mainland
- Current and past day programming and services
- Funding structures and operations of day programs
- Effective low-barrier programs
- Services that are most or least impactful
- Gaps in current and past day programming and services
- Barriers to offering day programming and services

Interviews took place in the month of February with the consent of stakeholders who wished to have their responses included in this report. Interviews were conducted both in person and virtually, working with the stakeholder's preference, and ranging from 60 minutes to 90 minutes. Each interview will start with an overview of our project and will include six questions drawn from our previous research, personalized with organizational research. Each interview also included unstructured, open-ended questions to promote deeper, reciprocal conversation. Stakeholders were informed of their right to end the interview, and to exclude sensitive information, and asked permission to be recorded to capture information as it is intended.

Organizations that accepted our invite for engagement:

- Society to End Homelessness, Burnaby
- Progressive Housing Society, Burnaby
- Evelyne Saller Centre, Vancouver
- The Gathering Place, Vancouver
- Lookout Housing and Health Society, New Westminster
- Solid Outreach Society, Victoria
- City of Victoria, Victoria

Following the interviews, we compiled audio recordings and transcriptions that are utilized to capture common themes, prominent quotes, identify recommendations for the City of Burnaby, as well as identify areas for further research and exploration.



# WHAT WE READ

## THAT SUCCESSFUL DAY PROGRAMS ARE LOW BARRIER

As a cornerstone of its strategy to address housing and homelessness, Burnaby has already adopted the Housing First approach. This approach, which prioritizes housing as the first step before other interventions, has been shown to help individuals move forward with their lives more successfully (Gaetz, Scott, & Gulliver, 2013). The Housing First model emphasizes that a person does not have to fit a certain profile or meet specific conditions to access support, such as abstaining from drugs. Rather, services should meet individuals where they're at and support them on their journey toward long-term housing stability. As Burnaby continues to uphold its commitment to Housing First, it is essential for this approach to expand to include day programs and service models that can further support unsheltered community members.

Day programs often serve people who “cannot get assistance elsewhere,” including individuals experiencing chronic homelessness, substance use issues, mental or physical disabilities, and even undocumented immigrants (Burt et al., 1999; Homeless Link, 2016). For many, these programs act as a “physical lifeline,” as people’s ability to survive often depends on access to day program services (Bowpitt et al., 2014). Given the increasing rate of homelessness in Burnaby, introducing or expanding day programs would provide critical support to many in the city. These programs can serve as a starting point for individuals to stabilize their lives and begin working toward permanent housing.

By applying a Housing First, low-barrier approach to day programs, Burnaby could ensure that services are accessible to everyone, regardless of their background or current circumstances. The key is creating programs that are available in “non-judgmental settings with low barriers to entrance,” where individuals who might be excluded from more restrictive programs (such as those requiring abstinence) can still access the support they need (Gaetz, Scott, & Gulliver, 2013). This model has been successfully employed by organizations like SOLID Outreach Society, which meets outstanding community needs by offering services that are either unavailable or restricted elsewhere, such as drug checking, HEP-C testing, and support in environments where drug or alcohol use is not a barrier (SOLID, n.d.).

A low-barrier approach goes beyond just substance use—it includes offering basic necessities, such as clean bathrooms, fresh towels, and a place to sit and enjoy a nutritious meal while belongings are laundered. These services help to create a safe, supportive environment where individuals can meet their immediate needs. In addition, programs can provide a sense of dignity and stability, which is crucial for people who are often marginalized and disconnected from society.

## CONTINUED

In other cities, like Calgary's Drop-In Centre or Dowler Place in Victoria, low-barrier support extends beyond the confines of a physical space, offering transportation to day programs and outreach teams to help individuals who may struggle to access services on their own. This approach ensures that support is not limited to those who can physically get to a location but is accessible to the broader unsheltered population. For Burnaby, this would mean operating outreach teams that can engage with unsheltered community members, help them access services, and build trust.

While homelessness in Burnaby does not have a single concentration, the homeless population is growing, and those who are precariously housed often live in informal, overcrowded situations. These individuals and families may not be on the streets or in shelters, but they are still in unstable housing situations that need attention. A comprehensive day program in Burnaby could help support these individuals and families, offering a safe, welcoming space for those who may not yet be ready to transition to stable housing but need immediate services to prevent further instability.

The concept of "place" and community-building is central to fostering a sense of belonging for unsheltered individuals. Offering programs where people can bring their belongings, store them safely, and access essential services like wound care or meals helps to create a sense of identity and legitimacy for those who are often overlooked or stigmatized (Douglas, 2023). By creating a space where individuals can feel safe and cared for, Burnaby's day programs could contribute to building a sense of community and support for people in need.

Another key element is offering opt-in programming, where individuals have the agency to decide which services or resources they wish to engage with. This could include skill-building workshops, social activities, or other community-building opportunities. Providing choice empowers individuals and is aligned with a trauma-informed care approach, where unsheltered community members are often penalized or excluded from services for not adhering to rigid program rules or treatment regimens (Ridgway, Simpson, Wittman, et al., 1994). SOLID Outreach Society's peer-led model is an excellent example of how this approach can work in practice. By allowing individuals to "see themselves, and their own potential" through connections with staff and others who share similar life experiences, SOLID has fostered community and growth, supporting over 3000 people (SOLID, n.d.).

By building on its existing Housing First framework and expanding with day programs, Burnaby can provide a more comprehensive support network for its unsheltered community, ensuring that more people have access to the resources, care, and sense of community that can help them transition to long-term, stable housing.

# WHAT WE READ

## THAT SUCCESSFUL DAY PROGRAMS ARE ACCESSIBLE

Ensuring that a day program location is free from environmental hazards will support the longevity of the program while providing a safe space for individuals to participate in the services offered. In harsh weather conditions, unsheltered individuals often turn to transit stops and stations as makeshift shelters, both during the day and night, to escape the elements (No Place to Go, 2024). This is largely due to a lack of places for people to go, especially after the closure of overnight shelters. Implementing accessible, weather-resistant shelter options during the day would alleviate pressure on existing infrastructure and reduce public safety concerns often raised by communities dealing with increased homelessness (No Place to Go, 2024). For Burnaby, this could look like a day program located on a site with both outdoor and indoor spaces, giving people an option to decide how they spend their time.

Transportation-related social exclusion is a critical issue for seniors, people with disabilities, and those experiencing homelessness or precarious housing situations (Greenwell, 2020). These groups often face challenges accessing transportation, whether due to limited private transportation options, a lack of public transit, or areas with poorly walkable neighborhoods (Greenwell, 2020). As a result, many people in these situations struggle to access essential community resources and services, including healthcare, employment opportunities, and skill-building programs. This highlights the need for Burnaby's day programs to be strategically located near public transportation options to ensure equitable access to services.

SOLID Outreach Society emphasizes the importance of accessibility by situating its main operations on the boundary of three different neighborhoods, within walking distance of services not provided at the day program itself. This model encourages individuals to access the day program services while also making it easy for them to reach nearby shelters, healthcare clinics, or even job interviews (SOLID, n.d.). Burnaby could adopt a similar strategy, ensuring that day programs are conveniently located to allow individuals to access a range of services within close proximity, reducing barriers to support.

While Burnaby is physically spread out and does not have a concentrated area of unsheltered community members like Vancouver or Victoria, identifying potential day program sites that are accessible by public transit and close to community resources can support Burnaby's efforts to meet the needs of its diverse population. This approach would ensure that people experiencing homelessness or housing instability in different areas of the city have equal access to the services they need to stabilize their lives.



# WHAT WE HEARD



## **SOCIETY TO END HOMELESSNESS / BURNABY**

### **Overview:**

The Society to End Homelessness is classified as an ORC (Outreach Resource Centre) which is a one-stop shop for unsheltered community members. The ORC provides multiple services such as food security, housing, clothing donations, tax clinics, foot care, medical treatment, and harm reduction. It is a low barrier nonprofit organization that has the ability to support unsheltered members by connecting them with different organizations such as Progressive Housing, Spirit of the Children, the Ministry of Poverty Reduction, CRA, Services Canada, and a poverty advocate. It was found through the engagement that the most utilized services by members were the food support services, both hot meals and non-perishable food items. Followed by showers, foot care, financial aid (tax support) and clothing. The ORC is only open on Wednesdays and Thursdays, with limited services, peer outreach and support, and showers on Wednesdays. The demographic of patrons is primarily 65 years and older, and has an average of 1,500 individuals accessing services every week.

### **What You Should Know:**

A key gap in services that the Society to End Homelessness faces is the absence of a nurse practitioner, which can only be obtained by Fraser Health Authority IHEART (Integrated Homelessness Action Response Team). The Society to End Homelessness reaffirmed the need for the nurse practitioner stating that the last nurse practitioner had the maximum caseload of 1,000 patients assisting in various types of care and highlighting that foot care was one of the most popular types of care utilized with most unsheltered spending the majority of time on their feet and the elderly not being able to properly maintain their feet. Furthermore, nurse practitioners are able to treat and support people who use drugs - noting that many site users are on prescribed methadone, which, after a few days of non-use, requires a new prescription. Other things to note include the offering of a poverty advocate who is able to assist people in accessing ID and other paperwork, as well as housing advocacy and tenancy support.

The Society to End Homelessness is funded primarily by donations, as well as grants and Coldest Night of the Year (CNOY) fundraisers. The organization currently rents the Neighbourhood Church at \$600 a month. However, it was revealed in the engagement session that the Neighbourhood Church is facing closure in October 2025 for a minimum of 5 years due to the land being redeveloped to make way for a housing development and retail space. While this organization has been told they are welcome to utilize a retail space location in the future, the cost remains unclear.

Finally, a dedicated female-only day centre which focuses on recovery as Burnaby due to the saturation in male attendance at the current drop-ins allowing for women to feel safe and comfortable accessing support services.

# WHAT WE HEARD



## PROGRESSIVE HOUSING SOCIETY / BURNABY

### **Overview:**

Progressive Housing Society is a non-profit organization that used to operate a drop-in centre, with funding over 2 years from Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM). At the drop-in, unsheltered community members had access to services, such as a main gathering space, a kitchen, laundry, showers, resting rooms and more. At its peak, the space saw 50 visitors per day with an average demographic of adults in their 30's-50's, and a high concentration of Indigenous community members.

Most offered services included harm reduction supplies, hygiene products, clothing, and food supplies. The site also had access to an LPN or Nurse Practitioner, as well as a designated outreach team which would assist community members with specific needs or services that were not offered at the location. Further, a variety of community events and programs fostered a sense of community and belonging -- board games, movie nights, as well as a cooking club, which was known to be a huge success, empowering people to learn a skill and feed themselves simultaneously.

### **What You Should Know:**

While the Progressive Housing Society achieved success in supporting unsheltered community members, the organization has struggled to secure enough funding to continue all of its services. To maintain a low-barrier, accessible program while addressing concerns from neighboring businesses—particularly regarding substance use—the Progressive Housing Society focused on building relationships with both visitors and local businesses. This included efforts to keep the area around the organization clear of trash and debris. However, significant gaps remained, such as limited shower facilities and operational hours that did not adequately serve all unsheltered individuals.

Through two years of program delivery, several important recommendations have been identified, including the allocation of space and funding for dedicated staff, such as nurses, social workers, and counsellors, to meet the needs of unsheltered community members while working to provide mental health support. Additionally, establishing a peer program and providing resources for group activities and community support are highlighted as critical components for improvement.



# WHAT WE HEARD

## **EVELYNE SALLER CENTRE / VANCOUVER**

### **Overview:**

The Evelyn Saller Centre (ESC) is a vital services hub for unsheltered community members, operating with a trauma-informed approach. Funded primarily by BC Housing and the City of Vancouver, the ESC provides around 700 meals daily -- accessible through cash, meal vouchers, or social assistance payments. It also offers hygiene facilities, including showers and laundry services. While ESC prioritizes essential services over structured programs, it also provides a popular drop-in space with a TV room, coffee, and social areas, fostering community and social engagement. The ESC also provides a winter overnight shelter, which offers temporary shelter for up to 42 individuals per night.

### **What You Should Know:**

Our interview highlighted that the ESC is facing an increasing demand for services but routinely lacks staff and space to meet the demands. While discussing recommendations for improving the center and future daytime services, ESC emphasized the need to expand healthcare staff hours to provide greater mental health and crisis intervention support. Additionally, they suggested implementing harm reduction initiatives, such as supervised consumption spaces or safe supply programs to improve safety for individuals at high risk of overdose. Another recommendation focused on the consistent overcapacity of the winter overnight shelter, underscoring the urgent need for additional emergency housing options. Lastly, the interview suggested introducing anonymous voluntary surveys to gather insights and tailor services more effectively while maintaining accessibility.





# WHAT WE HEARD

## THE GATHERING PLACE

### Overview:

The Gathering Place has been serving the Downtown South community since 1995, providing essential services to a diverse population, including unhoused individuals, low-income seniors, families, newcomers, and people facing mental health or substance use challenges. Operating 365 days a year at 24 hours a day, the center offers low-cost meals, hygiene facilities, laundry services, and a year-round overnight shelter for 34 individuals. Further, secure storage options for individuals in the shelter are also offered. In addition to these core services, the Gathering Place provides housing relocation support, arts and cultural programming, and recreational activities. Further, over 2,000 clothing items are dispersed weekly through public donations.

At this time, the Gathering Place is funded primarily by the City of Vancouver, which also supports other key service hubs such as Evelyn Saller Centre and Carnegie Community Centre.

### What You Should Know:

A key approach to service delivery at the Gathering Place is its peer-led support initiatives, which ensure that services are shaped by individuals with lived experience. According to our interview, focus groups led by trained peers provide valuable insights into the needs of Indigenous, LGBTQIA2S+, senior, and other marginalized communities, helping tailor services and reduce barriers to access. Another important aspect of the Gathering Place is its commitment to creating safe and inclusive spaces for women. To do this, the Gathering Place has a designated women-only sleeping area in the overnight shelter, ensuring a secure space for female-identifying individuals. Additionally, it offers women-only hours in the weight room and specializes programming for women experiencing homelessness, recognizing the importance of women-specific services in traditionally male-dominated shelter spaces.

Our interview emphasized the need for expanded health support, including the introduction of onsite healthcare or medical staff into day programming. Further, increasing staffing and resources for high-demand services such as showers, laundry, and the weight room would improve accessibility and reduce wait times, ensuring more people can utilize these critical resources. Additionally, implementing harm reduction initiatives such as supervised consumption spaces or safe supply programs would improve safety for people who use drugs, or are at increased risk of overdose.

When it comes to addressing concerns from the public and surrounding businesses, our interview stressed the importance of specialized public engagement efforts through educational outreach, offering tours, volunteer programs, and more -- all of which work to reduce stigma while fostering stronger community connections.



# WHAT WE HEARD

## LOOKOUT HOUSING & HEALTH SOCIETY / NEW WESTMINSTER

### **Overview:**

Lookout Housing and Health Society is a nonprofit organization that provides a variety of low barrier services, such as peer outreach and health services for unsheltered people. Lookout has partnered with various organizations like the Mood Disorder Association of BC, ARA Mental Health, and Keys Housing and Health Solutions, which has enabled them to offer a wide range of services such as medical and dental clinics, harm reduction and safe injection sites & programs, food bank services, employment services, pre-and post-hospital support, and psychiatric care. Lookout has contributed a substantial amount in supporting unsheltered communities and despite their presence, they too are also navigating funding reductions. Most recently, there has been a focus on developing peer-led programming, community services, and relationship building within the community. This involved checking in with neighbouring businesses proactively asking about potential issues before they arise. In addition Lookout has created a program called “Eyes on the Street”, where people assist in clean-up of neighbourhoods by working to fight social stigma and give back to the community. Funding for Lookout is primarily secured via grants from various organizations, most notably BC Housing as its primary funding source alongside Fraser Health Authority, municipal funding, and private donors.

### **What You Should Know:**

Lookout Housing emphasized the importance of a Housing First approach to effectively support unsheltered community members, with day centers and programs serving as supplementary services. Key suggestions from Lookout include replicating services already offered elsewhere, such as food, showers, peer support, medical and dental care, financial aid, and harm reduction. Another recommendation is to adopt a low-barrier approach to day programming, ensuring that individuals from all walks of life feel welcome. This involves selecting a location close to transit, making it easily accessible, and ideally situated in high-traffic areas near hospitals, grocery stores, overdose prevention sites (OPS), and community centers.

Lookout proposed that an ideal site should offer between 4,000 and 5,000 square feet of space, accommodating up to 300 people. They also suggested that Burnaby explore the creation of services in all four of its communities to support individuals throughout the city. Furthermore, it's worth noting that Fraser Health Authority and Family Practice have recently opened a clinic on Edmonds called MOSAIC Community Clinic, centred around assisting unsheltered community members and new immigrants who are struggling to find stable support. However, it is of note that this programming is operating at high barrier, and is not available to everyone.



# WHAT WE HEARD

## **SOLID OUTREACH SOCIETY**

### **Overview:**

Dowler Place is located in the City of Victoria and provides transitional housing and support services for individuals at risk of returning to homelessness after leaving stabilization programs, hospitals, or short-term services like detox and treatment. The center offers intensive case management, helping residents connect with healthcare, housing, and employment opportunities while developing personalized pathways to stability. The interview also highlighted the significance of Dowler Place's peer-led support, where people with lived experience mentor and guide other community members, empowering each other through connection and care while reducing isolation. Further, their peer employment model also allows participants to take on increasing responsibilities and transition into full-time and/or long-term employment. Additionally, Dowler Place operates on flexible employment structures, offering customized shifts and financial assistance to accommodate the unique challenges of people with diverse lived experience.

### **What You Should Know:**

It is of importance to note that despite its innovative approach, SOLID's Dowler Place is still unstable due to limitations in funding. Currently, Dowler Place is primarily funded through a short-term government contract with the City of Victoria, which creates uncertainty about its long-term sustainability. The organization is now seeking additional grants from BC Housing, Island Health, and municipal sources to ensure the continuation and expansion of services. This lack of sustainable funding limits Dowler Place's ability to expand services, hire additional staff, and introduce harm reduction initiatives that would further support unsheltered community members. Further highlighted is the demand to do a lot with very little.

Additionally, SOLID has learned from firsthand experience that announcing services before implementation often leads to public distrust and uncertainty, whereas demonstrating the program's effectiveness post-launch has helped shift public perception. Strengthening educational outreach and public engagement through open houses also works to reduce stigma and foster greater acceptance of harm reduction, day programming, and more. Additionally, expanding mobile outreach teams and working to establish smaller service sites across multiple the city would improve accessibility for dispersed populations.



# WHAT WE HEARD

## CITY OF VICTORIA

### **Overview:**

Engaging with the City of Victoria allowed for us to gain an understanding of the processes that led to the city entering into a Service Agreement with SOLID Outreach Society to operate Dowler Place. The interview offered background information on how Dowler Place was initially launched as a temporary warming center to address a gap in daytime support for unhoused individuals that are required to vacate overnight shelters each morning.

Recognizing the ongoing need for permanent support, the City of Victoria directly contracted SOLID, a nonprofit organization, to operate the facility. To support this initiative, the City provided financial assistance from their financial reserves to support SOLID in securing a permanent building for Dowler Place, alongside a committed additional funding to sustain operations for one year. While the contract initially focused on providing daytime services for individuals coming directly from the street, the program gradually evolved to include more structured, program-based services and limited overnight sheltering.

### **What You Should Know:**

It is important to note that while the City has supported SOLID, additional funding sources have been difficult to secure. The nonprofit sought funding from BC Housing, Island Health, and a federal grant program - all without any success. For this reason, without renewed funding from the City of Victoria, Dowler Place's future remains uncertain.

Both the City and SOLID have faced concern from neighboring businesses and community members, which has delayed operations despite efforts to select a location with minimal residential impact. While moving forward with elements of opposition was a political risk, the City remains dedicated to supporting unsheltered community members in the region.

Further, the City offered support around balancing public consultation and program implementation, acknowledging that launching the service first and addressing concerns as they arise has been more effective. Victoria found that demonstrating success after launch helped shift public opinion over time. Finally, Victoria is working to integrate Social Service Hubs into its Official Community Plan (OCP) to support future service expansion.

A consideration for Burnaby provided by Victoria is the consideration of creating multiple smaller service centers over a single large hub that could better meet the needs of different neighborhoods. Further, strategic site selection was also emphasized—service centers should be located away from densely populated residential areas, yet remain accessible to healthcare services and transit.

# PROGRAMMING RECOMMENDATIONS

## **MEALS**

Many day programs serve low-cost meals throughout the day to support people's needs while working to prevent large groups of people showing up at once. For example, Evelyne Saller Centre provides full course meals for \$2/plate from 10 AM to 5 PM. People can pay by cash at the time they receive their meal, or they can pre-pay through a "Client Meal Account." Further, people can also opt to have their service cheques directly deposited to the Centre. Similarly, the Gathering Place serves low-cost meals steadily throughout the day from 9 AM to 7 PM. However, Gathering Place differs in that the cost varies depending on the meal. Breakfast is the lowest in cost at \$2.25 per serving, while dinner is the highest in cost at \$3.50 per serving.

Other facilities offer free lunch bags and snacks to those in need. These centres include the Outreach Resource Centre, Lookout Housing and Health Society, and Progressive Housing Society. Although this model may be ideal in that it is the most low barrier, it may also be less self-sustaining, offering less portions at less frequent times.



## **LAUNDRY**

Providing washers and dryers is another essential service for a drop-in day centre, with many centres operating 10 washers and dryers each, along with one heavy duty machine designed for larger items, such as blankets. Centres typically have individuals hand off laundry in clear plastic bags that are labelled to staff, where it will be laundered and held for three days for pick-up. Abandoned clothing is used or donated to other nearby organizations. In the past, Evelyne Saller Centre allowed community members to do their own laundry, but with COVID-19, the centre shifted to having staff operate the laundry machines to prevent multiple individuals from gathering in the laundry area and touching surfaces. The centre has maintained this model as it's been more efficient and impactful on the community. Further, by ensuring people have access to clean laundry, unsheltered community members are significantly less likely to be discriminated against when accessing other community resources, or in job interviews, housing applications, and more.



# PROGRAMMING RECOMMENDATIONS

## **SHOWERS**

Many day programs operate showers every day of the week, starting at 9 AM and ending in the evening between 5 to 7 PM, with reduced hours on the weekends. The majority of day programs offer 5-10 shower spaces. Some day programs require people to sign up beforehand, while others are provided on a first-come, first-served basis. For example, Evelyne Saller Centre initially provided a first-come, first-served basis, but when COVID-19 first emerged, the centre switched to a sign-up style to minimize individuals congregating to wait for a shower. While the Centre aimed to return to a first-come, first-served basis, many people stated that they preferred the sign-up method because it offered agency, allowing them to schedule their own time, and plan their days around this time. For this reason, the centre decided to keep the sign-up model as it appears to better fit the needs of unsheltered community members.

In addition to showers, centres also provide unsheltered community members with shampoo, soap, conditioner, razors, and towels. Some facilities, such as the Gathering Place, provide additional shower products such as slippers and conditioners for curly hair, for comfort and inclusivity. Evelyne Saller Centre and the Gathering Place have a limited shower time of 30 and 35 minutes respectively. If people frequently go over their allotted time, they may face restricted access to shower products. For example, Evelyne Saller Centre will restrict razors handed out.

It is worth noting that with this model, it means that the centre cannot maximize the amount of shower users per day, as each shower session has an allocated 30 minutes with 15 minutes in between showers to ensure staff has time to sanitize the space before the next person arrives. This means that even if a person only showers for five minutes, the next person will not arrive for another 40 minutes.



## **STORAGE**

Many day programs urged storage lockers as an essential service for unsheltered community members. While some centres provide locks, others require individuals to bring their own lock, with most centres having approximately 20 small lockers, as one sees in a community or recreational centre. At this time, only the centres that offer overnight shelter extend their storage beyond day program hours. At the end of the operating day, if there are any belongings left behind, all centres have the same policy of removing the lock and donating abandoned items. By having a place to safely store their belongings, unsheltered community members are empowered to access other services and support with reduced stigma, such as Service Canada, dentist/doctor appointments, and more.








# **PROGRAMMING RECOMMENDATIONS**

## **SPECIALIZED ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

A recurring issue organizations operating day programs face is negative response to neighbours and businesses in the nearby community. Further, it's been found that these issues are often exacerbated by public hearings and community engagement opportunities, where unhoused community members are traditionally unwelcome. For this reason, offering specialized engagement opportunities once a drop-in day centre is established in a community supports better integration of a day program into a community or area. By providing community-led events, such as tours and collaboration opportunities with neighboring businesses and residents, stigma and fear often associated with day programming and unsheltered people are addressed head-on. SOLID Outreach Society mentions that community tours have been an effective way of welcoming the greater public into the day program space as a way of offering information about services provided and to whom, as well as how day programming for unsheltered community members is a good thing for everyone. As the City of Burnaby explores moving forward with day programming, offering specialized engagement opportunities once a drop-in day centre is established will reduce negative community response while fostering support for unsheltered community members long-term.

## ***PEER-LED PRACTICE***

Many organizations cited the importance of hiring staff members who have lived experience with housing precarity or homelessness. This is a model that Lookout Housing and Health Society and SOLID Outreach Society have both implemented successfully. This is an effective and impactful model, as hired staff are better able to understand the challenges and experiences of unsheltered community members. This leads to greater community building and helps unsheltered community members to feel a sense of belonging without shame or stigma. For example, an unsheltered community member is less likely to feel judged by staff who have gone through similar experiences as them, and are more likely to feel comfortable confiding in these staff members. Similarly, organizations have emphasized the importance of offering peer-led activities and discussions. By offering these, they provide individuals with a safe space to share their experiences and work through challenges they are facing.



Further, organizations suggested that information, when conveyed by staff who have lived experiences, compared to someone who does not, is more impactful and effective - both when it comes to following Codes of Conduct, and when accessing resources. On the contrary, when information is being communicated from people without lived experience, where an unsheltered community member may feel they are being talked down to. Further, having staff with lived experiences is beneficial in that staff may be more perceptive in noticing behavioural changes, and where these changes may arise from, such as noticing signs of poisoned drugs. All of these factors make organizations with staff that have lived experience better equipped to work<sup>25</sup> with and provide support to unsheltered community members.



# PROGRAMMING RECOMMENDATIONS

## **DESIGN AND LAYOUT**

Organizations emphasize the importance of having a welcoming, functional design layout, which translates to minimizing confined spaces and clinical design concepts. This approach is also successful when it comes to converting rooms used for day activities and programs into overnight shelters. For example, Evelyne Saller Centre expressed the benefits of having open space so that they can place floor mats throughout the centre while operating their temporary winter response shelter.

Further, SOLID Outreach Society shared that providing outdoor courtyard space is an essential design component. Further, a fenced courtyard space with seating and tables is ideal, as it allows unsheltered community members to enjoy the outdoors and get fresh air while still having privacy. Additionally, having an outdoor courtyard also provides unsheltered community members with a designated smoke space, making the facility low barrier. This aligns with what we heard from many other organizations, who allow unsheltered community members to simply enter centres, so long as members are abiding by their Code of Conduct. An important note, however, is that organizations we engaged with do not allow individuals to consume any substances on site, instead providing direction and support to community members wishing to access Overdose Prevention Sites (OPS) or other places for safe consumption.

To create a functional, welcoming place, the Gathering Place has focused on creating space for all community members. In particular, the Gathering Place showcases local community art throughout the facility. Further, the Gathering Place emphasizes creating a clean space, both inside and outside the facility and doing regular building maintenance. The Gathering Place also offers amenities that are desirable to the broader public, such as a weight room. To access the weight room, members of the public simply need to have a membership, which they can acquire free of charge. This is a crucial component of making the facility low barrier to all and provides a healthy outlet for people who drop-in. The weight room is fully equipped with a variety of differing weights and machines, including equipment to accommodate wheelchair users and others with accessibility. The weight room also has long hours to accommodate a wide demographic of people. In particular, the weight room is open seven days a week, and offers a “women only” hour. This helps to ensure that individuals are able to make use of the space, regardless of disabilities, gender and sexuality, work hours and more. This is a critical component in making the space welcoming for all.

Lastly, to make the centre a welcoming place, the Gathering Place also hosts two community events each year: an annual block party during the summer and a celebration for The Day of the Dead. Additionally, the organization has hosted a few outdoor festivals in an effort to foster relationships with individuals residing in the area and offer culturally-relevant opportunities for community connection. The organization has cited these community events as a successful method of connecting with the broader public.



# LOCATION ADVICE

An effective day program is situated near low barrier medical and dental clinics, public spaces like libraries, community centres, as well as nearby banks and government agencies. By being in close proximity to these places ensures individuals are able to access resources and assistance they need without having to travel elsewhere.

In particular, being situated nearby a low barrier medical clinic or Urgent Primary Care Centre offers an alternative to staff at day programs having to provide medical intervention. This aligns with the models that other day centres have employed who have not been able to meet the need themselves. While many frontline staff members in day programs are not Nurse Practitioners or licensed medical staff, they have elected to undergo CPR and naloxone training. Overall, having nearby medical clinics would reduce pressures off of staff members whilst providing nearby medical care and referrals to individuals in need. Further, dental care is another essential service that emerged from our engagement, with organizations indicating that poor dental hygiene or missing many teeth often serves as an indicator that an individual has lived on the street - contributing to stigma and discrimination when seeking employment. While it may be difficult to offer dental services directly out of a drop-in centre, it is feasible and beneficial to have day programming situated near dental clinics to facilitate individuals' access to dental care.

By being close to a library, people can access tools to support them, such as books, computers and internet, as well as printers and other resources, which all support unsheltered community members with support in navigating employment or housing opportunities and more. Similarly, community centres can also allow individuals to engage in fitness activities, as well as access wellness amenities, such as steam rooms, saunas, and hot tubs. For this reason, libraries and community centres fulfill the needs of individuals and could function to fill in any gaps that may exist with the establishment of a new drop-in day centre.

Having a drop-in day centre near public transit is critical to ensure that the site is easily accessible for unsheltered community members. This means having multiple bus stops close to the drop-in centre to ensure people have multiple modes of transportation to access the site, and are not relying on a single bus route. Having multiple buses ensures that individuals can commute to and from various areas of the city, and also prevents buses from being overcrowded.

In the context of Burnaby, an effective day program should be situated within the same neighbourhood as the Outreach Resource Centre (ORC). The ORC currently operates on Wednesdays and Thursdays, but will be shutting its door in October due to redevelopment. The ORC is looking to relocate but to remain in the same neighbourhood as they have been well established there for many years, with both sheltered and unsheltered community members familiar with their work. Therefore, relocating while remaining within the same neighbourhood would make a smooth transition with ease of access to services. This neighbourhood has all of the services listed above: five medical clinics, five dental clinics, Burnaby Public Library, and Edmonds Community Centre. There are also 10 bus stops located nearby.

It is worth noting that having one site established for approximately 50 people provides a starting point for access. However, many stakeholders voiced how it would be beneficial to have multiple sites across the city. This ensures that there is not a large concentration of individuals at one given site, helping to offer sustainable and effective programming.



# **FUNDING ADVICE**

**Long term funding sources are needed to sustain programs that support unsheltered community members while providing them with essential services to keep them stable, such as the following:**

- City of Burnaby Financial Reserves
- Provincial Funding, such as BC Housing and Fraser Health Authority
- Employment partnerships, such as WorkBC
- Federal Funding, such as Canada's Housing and Homeslessness Strategy Programming
- Real Estate Foundation of BC Grant
- SPARC BC Research and Program Funding
- Partnerships with Like-Minded Nonprofit Organizations
- Partnerships with First Nations and Indigenous Organizations

## **FRASER HEALTH AUTHORITY GRANT PROGRAM**

This grant has two streams. The first, the Macro Health Grant, is an annual grant offering up to \$25,000 for large-scale initiatives that improve community health and well-being, foster partnerships, and support long-term projects. The second stream, the Micro Health Grant, provides up to \$10,000 per quarter, totalling \$50,000 annually. It supports smaller, localized initiatives that enhance existing services, improve program accessibility, and fund minor infrastructure and equipment purchases. Unlike the Macro Health Grant, the Micro Health Grant focuses on immediate, targeted improvements. Both streams are ideal for the City of Burnaby to address current service gaps, such as dedicated showers for women and children, community events, food provisions, and housing assistance. During engagement with Progressive Housing, the popularity of safe storage and resting spaces was highlighted, as they provide unsheltered community members with secure places to store belongings and rest. Additionally, increased access to showers was a common recommendation across all organizations. Currently, the Micro Health grant application deadlines are April 11, 2025, June 13, 2025, October 10, 2025, January 16, 2026 and the Macro Health grant deadline is on October 10, 2025. Given that the City of Burnaby has eligibility for these grants, and its goals align with the objectives of the grant, applying for this grant would be wise.

## **UBCM STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES PROGRAM**

This provincial grant provides a total of \$100 million to support unsheltered populations and address service gaps in communities across British Columbia. The funding amount varies depending on the applicant. The City of Burnaby has been a successful recipient on two separate occasions, in 2021 and 2022, receiving approximately \$2.1 million in total. While the Strengthening Communities Program from UBCM is not currently accepting applications, it is essential for the City to reapply when the opportunity arises. Based on our engagement findings, this substantial funding could support essential services and community-building programs, including cooking classes, employment workshops, housing and financial support, and women-specific programs.

# **FUNDING ADVICE**

## **UNITED BRITISH COLUMBIA'S REACHING HOME: CANADA'S HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY**

This grant is available to non-profit organizations, municipalities, and Indigenous organizations, making the City of Burnaby eligible to apply. It supports projects focused on supportive housing and financial aid to help individuals obtain or retain housing. Client support services funded by the grant include essentials such as clothing, food, safe storage, ID assistance, and harm reduction. Capital investments cover the purchase or renovation of emergency shelters, transitional housing, and supportive housing, along with necessary appliances and supplies. Additionally, funding can enhance staff capabilities and overall service quality through resource coordination and data quality improvements. These align with the needs of a successful day program, as highlighted in our engagement sessions. Several organizations have emphasized the importance of these essential services, which fall within the scope of the Reaching Home grant. While applications for this year closed on January 27, it is recommended that the City of Burnaby apply in the next intake. According to the Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy website, \$5 billion will be invested in the program between 2019 and 2028.

## **GRANTS & CONTRIBUTIONS TO SUPPORT URBAN PROGRAMMING FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES**

This Government of Canada grant supports projects that help organizations deliver a broad range of programs and services to Indigenous peoples. Eligible applicants include Indigenous organizations, municipal governments, education authorities and institutions (such as school boards, foundations, and associations), health authorities and institutions, and non-Indigenous organizations. As a result, the City of Burnaby is eligible to apply. The grant can fund facilities, materials, and supplies for Indigenous-focused programs, as well as cover salaries, employee benefits, and volunteer expenses. Supporting staff and volunteers can be especially beneficial, allowing programs to employ individuals with lived experience, fostering peer-led practices. Our engagement sessions highlighted that peer-led programs significantly enhance the experiences of unsheltered patrons.

Recipients opting for grant funding may receive up to \$50,000, while contribution funding offers access to a share of \$150,000,000 across other funding streams. Unlike grants, contribution funding requires ongoing monitoring, with recipients submitting reports to demonstrate how funds are used and progress toward specific objectives throughout the fiscal year.

Applications are currently closed, as successful applicants receive funding for two years. With ongoing projects in their final year of funding, new applications are anticipated to open in 2026. Given the City of Burnaby's eligibility and the alignment of its goals with the grant's objectives, applying for this funding would be highly advantageous.

# **FUNDING ADVICE**

## **SOCIAL PLANNING AND RESEARCH COUNCIL OF BC**

SPARC BC is an independent registered charity that collaborates with BC communities to promote a just and inclusive society, focusing on accessibility, inclusion, and social policy. While its funding is a one-time offer, it remains a valuable potential resource. In 2019, SPARC BC introduced the Homeless Community Action Grant, providing one-time payments for various projects. Funding includes \$5,000 to \$10,000 for smaller projects completed within 6 to 12 months, \$10,000 to \$25,000 for mid-size projects over 12 to 18 months, and \$25,000 to \$50,000 for larger projects with established partnerships and demonstrated results over 12 to 24 months. Though not a sustainable ongoing source, this grant can be beneficial for future initiatives. It supports local action to increase public awareness, address service gaps, and enhance knowledge about homelessness and its causes. Funds can be used for hygiene supplies, mobile showers, and laundry machines, which were identified as high-priority needs during our engagement sessions. Additional funding could also support dedicated programs for women and children, as well as mobile outreach teams to extend services beyond a single location.

## **THE REAL ESTATE FOUNDATION OF BC (REFBC) GRANT**

This philanthropic grant supports projects that advance Indigenous rights and interests, as well as initiatives promoting justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion for racialized and historically marginalized communities. We believe that individuals who are unsheltered, precariously housed, struggling with substance abuse, or experiencing poverty fall within this category. The grant specifically funds built environment projects, making it a potential resource for supporting the development of a day centre and its programs. Eligible project costs include staffing and program delivery, project coordination, workshops and training, ceremonies and cultural protocols, community-driven questions, addressing community-identified gaps, and implementing community-level solutions. A day centre and its associated programs would align with the grant's assessment criteria, focusing on relationship-building and addressing a high-priority need in Burnaby communities. The grant could provide funding for hiring and training staff, offering harm reduction education, supporting housing needs and tenant rights education, and providing job training and other essential services. Funding streams include \$5,000 to \$50,000 for smaller projects, \$50,000 to over \$100,000 for larger province-wide projects, and \$100,000 to \$300,000 for multi-year, complex projects and initiatives. Applications are currently open, with a general grant deadline in winter 2026.



HOW CAN WE MOVE FORWARD?



# **RECOMMENDATION #1**

## **A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE CITY & SOCIETY TO END HOMELESSNESS**

In our conversation with Dowler Place and the City of Victoria, officials highlighted how the City addressed the need for permanent support by directly contracting SOLID, a nonprofit organization, to operate the facility. To support this initiative, the City provided financial assistance, helping SOLID secure a permanent building for Dowler Place and committing additional funding to sustain operations for a year.

Our interviewee at Dowler Place emphasized that securing a building for homelessness services is often extremely difficult, and without the City's support, it is unlikely that Dowler Place would have established a permanent location. This reflects a broader issue — many service providers struggle to find suitable buildings, making Dowler Place fortunate to receive municipal backing.

This model could be applied in the City of Burnaby. The Mayor's Task Force on Unsheltered Community Members has identified expanding daytime programming as a key priority, recognizing that these services provide essential resources to precariously housed individuals. Additionally, a major service provider in Burnaby, the Society to End Homelessness (STEh), is set to lose its location at Neighbourhood Church in October 2025 due to redevelopment. This would cause a major disruption to essential services, but it also presents an opportunity for the City of Burnaby to step in, partner with STEh, and secure a new location to maintain service continuity.

Our interview with Dowler Place staff highlighted how the organization faced challenges securing ongoing funding beyond the City's initial investment. Their difficulties obtaining grants from BC Housing, Island Health, and federal programs highlight the need for a long-term sustainability plan. Therefore, if Burnaby adopted a similar partnership model, developing a robust financial strategy beyond initial funding would be crucial to ensure program longevity.

In a potential partnership with STEh, the City could support the application process for grants, such as the Micro Health grant, and provide a dedicated space for the society to operate. A blended model would be more suitable than a stand-alone facility, as many grants do not cover capital costs but focus on service delivery. This model would offer greater flexibility in securing funding and expedite service implementation, bypassing the need for land acquisition and construction.



STEH has expressed difficulty finding a suitable relocation site, making it advantageous for the City to assist by offering a space. One option would be to allow the society to operate out of a community centre, such as the Edmonds Community Centre. Its location near the Outreach Resource Centre ensures familiarity for unsheltered individuals and proximity to essential services like medical and dental clinics, the public library, and public transit. Additionally, the community centre prioritizes room rentals for community programs and drop-in activities.

Edmonds Community Centre has six rooms available for day programs and services: three multi-purpose rooms, an arts studio, an active studio room, and an outdoor plaza. The active studio room, at 300 square meters with a capacity of 100 people, would be suitable for serving meals during specific time slots. Alternatively, for staggered meal service, the arts room with a capacity of 50 people may be preferable.

Other rooms could accommodate additional services. Multi-purpose Room 1 (capacity: 30 people) could be used by STEH to provide clothing, hygiene, and harm reduction supplies. Multi-purpose Room 4 (capacity: 25 people) could house services like the ID Bank or provide space for outreach workers from the Integrated Homelessness Action Response Team (IHART) and the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction (MSDPRBC).

Room rentals require advance booking as they fill up quickly. Rentals can only be made within the span of each season: January-March, April-June, July-August, and September-December. Rental fees include \$142.50 per hour for the active studio room, \$99.75 per hour for the arts room, and \$51.97 per hour for the multi-purpose rooms, excluding taxes and liability insurance. Insurance is not provided with rentals and must be sourced externally.

For events outside regular hours, a special event application and facility manager approval are required, incurring additional fees. While ongoing rentals are possible, they are limited to the current season.

A partnership between the City of Burnaby and STEH would be mutually beneficial. The City could delegate day-to-day operations to a trusted organization with established rapport within the unsheltered community. STEH's deep understanding of the local context and expertise positions them well to lead service delivery.

With additional grant funding, STEH could expand its hours of operation. Currently, the Outreach Resource Centre (ORC) operates only on Wednesdays and Thursdays. Grant support could enable expansion to Mondays and Tuesdays, offering more consistent access to services.

Further funding would allow STEH to hire additional staff, reducing reliance on volunteers and enhancing program delivery. With its experience and expertise, STEH is well-equipped to scale its services. Overall, a partnership between the City of Burnaby and STEH would provide long-term, sustainable support for unsheltered community members.

# RECOMMENDATION #2

## RESTORATION OF THE HUB

Restoring the Homeless HUB could be a viable solution to address the challenges currently faced by the City of Burnaby. Originally established in partnership with Progressive Housing Society, the HUB offered a wide range of essential services to meet the basic needs of the unsheltered community. While the program was successful, funding gradually depleted, ultimately leading to its closure. Reopening the HUB could provide a revitalized space for unsheltered community members, offering critical support and resources.

Through our engagement with Progressive Housing Society, it was evident that the services provided by the HUB were invaluable. These included harm reduction supplies, hygiene products, clothing, food supplies, shower services, nurse practitioners, safe storage, resting spaces, and community events. These resources played a significant role in helping unsheltered individuals regain stability and improve their quality of life.

However, there are areas where services could be enhanced. One key improvement would be expanding access to healthcare providers and extending operating hours to ensure all unsheltered individuals receive timely care. Progressive Housing Society also highlighted the importance of their community outreach team, which provided targeted assistance to individuals unable to access the main HUB location. Maintaining and expanding such outreach efforts would further enhance the program's reach.

Community events at the HUB, particularly cooking nights, were highly popular. These events not only equipped individuals with valuable skills but also fostered a sense of belonging through collaborative experiences. Expanding this initiative by increasing kitchen space or hosting events more frequently could further strengthen community connections.

Additionally, the HUB faced significant challenges with limited shower facilities. Engagement feedback indicated that the existing single shower was insufficient to meet demand. Expanding shower capacity and introducing designated individual bathrooms would provide safer and more comfortable access, especially for women and children.

Resting spaces also require enhancement. The HUB's "dark room," designed with cots to offer a safe space for rest, was frequently used by individuals who later accessed other services. Installing bunk beds could increase capacity while providing individual resting areas for vulnerable populations. Separate, secure sleeping spaces for women and children would further promote safety and dignity.

These service improvements could be supported through grant funding. Securing grants would enable the HUB to expand its amenities, improve service delivery, and enhance accessibility. With increased capacity and improved facilities, the HUB could attract greater participation in community events, fostering a more inclusive and supportive environment for unsheltered individuals.



# RECOMMENDATION #3

## EXPANSION OF EXISTING PROGRAMMING

A viable option that the City could pursue would be to expand on existing programming and services. This blended model would involve offering services through established community centres, such as the Edmonds Community Centre, the Nikkei National Museum and Cultural Centre, or the Tommy Douglas Library. Using existing spaces reduces the time and financial burden of construction and maintenance while allowing staff, utilities, and facilities to be shared efficiently.

A blended model can foster community integration by providing unsheltered individuals with opportunities to engage in social activities and access resources alongside other community members. This visibility can reduce stigma and encourage greater community support and advocacy.

Additionally, central locations make community centres more accessible to both unsheltered individuals and the general public. For instance, the Edmonds Community Centre offers bathrooms, showers, and several multi-purpose rooms that could accommodate expanded day programming. The Nikkei National Museum provides cultural programs, language classes, and community events that promote inclusion and foster a sense of belonging. Similarly, the Tommy Douglas Library offers resources like public computers, study spaces, and a community room equipped for workshops and training sessions. This would provide access to job search tools, resume aids, and online resources that could be particularly beneficial for unsheltered individuals seeking employment.

A blended model would be advantageous in that it can provide a sustainable and consistent level of support for homeless individuals. By embedding homeless services into community-focused models, there is potential for long-term growth and broader community backing, which may be more difficult to achieve with a stand-alone facility that is viewed as niche or specialized.

Overall, expanding existing programming through community centres not only improves the accessibility and range of services, but also fosters a sense of belonging, reduces stigma, and builds a stronger support network, which are key factors in addressing the root causes and challenges of homelessness.

# CONTINUED

However, there are several limitations to a blended model. Community centres must balance the needs of various user groups, which can dilute the effectiveness of services tailored for unsheltered individuals. Staff may lack specialized training to address the complex challenges faced by this population. Additionally, limited space and resources could restrict the extent and quality of services offered.

Further, staff at stand-alone facilities are often trained to address the specific challenges faced by unsheltered individuals. These facilities can offer specialized programs targeting different groups, such as women, youth, or individuals experiencing substance misuse. Therefore, a blended model may lack the benefits of having specialized trained staff and targeted programming. A blended model may also be deficient in the security services it is able to provide. This is detrimental in that staff and security measures ensure the safety of both clients and the public.

Blended models also lack operational flexibility. In particular, it may be difficult to achieve flexibility in scheduling, budgeting, and resource allocation with a blended model. Blended models are not designed with the specific needs of unsheltered individuals in mind, and may lack key amenities such as cafeterias, storage areas, and private spaces for vulnerable populations such as women and families. Long-term support, such as case management and housing assistance, may be harder to implement in a blended model. Without dedicated infrastructure and partnerships, unsheltered individuals may struggle to transition into stable housing.

# SUMMARY OF CHOICES

## **A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE CITY & SOCIETY TO END HOMELESSNESS**

### **PROS OF THIS APPROACH**

- City can delegate day-to-day operations to a trusted organization
- STEH has an understanding of the local context, expertise, and rapport with community members

### **CONS TO THIS APPROACH**

- City would have to configure a financial plan to ensure the longevity and sustainability of the partnership, which may pose challenges
- City would have to determine an appropriate site for STEH to utilize

## **RESTORATION OF THE HUB**

### **PROS OF THIS APPROACH**

- Previously determined to be successful in providing day programming and services for unsheltered community members
- Site and building already exist, which increases efficiency in that no time or money has to be allocated to locating a space or constructing a building

### **CONS TO THIS APPROACH**

- Would require updating programming and services to better meet the needs of the current unsheltered population, which would require more money and resources
- City would need to determine a long-term financial plan to ensure the longevity and sustainability of the HUB, which may pose challenges

# CONTINUED

## **EXPANSION OF EXISTING PROGRAMMING**

### **PROS OF THIS APPROACH**

- Efficient in that no time or money has to be spent on constructing a new site; day programming & services could be implemented immediately
- A blended model can also foster community integration

### **CONS TO THIS APPROACH**

- Community centres must balance the needs of various user groups, which can dilute the effectiveness of services tailored for unsheltered individuals.
- Because it is existing infrastructure, it was not intentionally designed with consideration to the needs of unsheltered community members and as such may lack the necessary infrastructure

# LIMITATIONS

As communities like Burnaby continue to grow, we know that the face of homelessness is continuing to change. For this reason, it is worth noting that this report is primarily based on two City of Burnaby reports carried out over the course of 2023, and passed through Council in 2024. This report is published simultaneously around the 2025 Point-In-Time Count, where more accurate and up-to-date data on demographics will soon be available to better reflect diverse populations within the unsheltered community. In addition to this, most demographic data has been found through the 2023 Point-In-Time Count, and has not been affirmed by our Community Engagement that includes no quantitative data primarily due to keeping low-barrier services.

Further, two areas of Planning that did not come up when conducting community engagement includes:

- 1.Exploration of Trauma-Informed Design
- 2.Exploration of Culturally Sensitive Care and Programming

As the City of Burnaby continues to explore resources to serve unsheltered community members needs, we recommend the need for a Developmental Evaluation Framework to be employed to ensure day programming is adjusted and adapted to continuously meet the needs of unsheltered community members.

While the original draft of this report included the exploration of housing and providing shelter to unsheltered community members, it has become apparent that the primary focus of this report is offering day programming and service models for unsheltered community members. At times, it is difficult to separate these two conversations largely due to the perception through our primary and secondary research that housing is the greatest need for unsheltered community members. Something worth exploring within the greater community of Burnaby is working to foster a greater understanding of homelessness and community resources, and how, by offering different options while working to house community members is part of a robust community response that is actualized by making a stronger commitment to not only a Housing First framework, but moving to recognizing that housing is a human right altogether.

# CONCLUSION

## SOLVING THE PROBLEM

As housing costs soar, wages remain stagnant, and populations grow and age, access to stable, affordable housing remains increasingly out of reach for many.

While the landscape of homelessness continues to shift, proactive and informed municipal action can make a meaningful impact. “Somewhere to Go” explores the role of day programming as a critical intervention, in which unsheltered community members can have access to essential services that support their dignity and well-being.

The engagement work done by our team identified several key programming recommendations that should be taken into account. By implementing programming, such as meals, showers, laundry, storage, as well as services that offer opportunities for specialized engagement, community design, and peer-led practice, unsheltered community members can access critical services today while building a bridge toward housing security for the future.

Through exploring funding opportunities and pathways for partnership, our team has put forward three recommendations for the City to choose from. From the three recommendations, a partnership between the City and Society to End Homelessness has the greatest potential to effectively navigate the implementation of day programming and service models. This is due to several factors, including the unique local knowledge, expertise, and community ties that the society has to offer. However, each recommendation contains several advantages and disadvantages that the City must take into careful consideration to select the most effective and sustainable solution for its community.

Ultimately, there are many ways forward to address the lack of spaces and services available to unsheltered community members. All of these pathways work to restore dignity and respect to all community members, ensuring that everyone has somewhere to go.





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