



City of Richmond
6911 No. 3 Road
Richmond, BC

January 16, 2024

Mayor & Councillors

Re: Richmond City staff report December 19, 2023, entitled “*Homelessness in Richmond*”

This is a submission from the Richmond Poverty Reduction Coalition (RPRC) regarding the above-noted city staff report. The RPRC analyzed the report and brings forward observations and recommendations to improve the City’s homeless action plan. The topic staff report resulted from a City Council referral on a “*Motion: Homeless Crisis*” that was approved by Council on October 16, 2023.

Background

The City is to be commended for recognizing that homelessness in Richmond is indeed a crisis. As reported in the 2023 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count,¹ homelessness in Richmond has increased 91%, from 85 people in 2020 to 162 in 2023. We know this is an undercount for many reasons - it is a point-in-time count, it does not enumerate people couch surfing, and some people decline to participate even if it is clear they are unhoused.

But it must be understood that people experiencing homelessness are not one homogeneous group. In fact, the 2023 Homeless Count noted homelessness in seniors continues to be on the rise. In addition, more women, children, and youth are becoming homeless than in previous counts. Many of this population are not experiencing addiction or mental health issues.

The staff report tends to treat all homeless as requiring extensive support services, which is not without merit. Many do suffer and need supports. However, we are informed by the Food Aid Delivery (FAD) Coalition and Richmond Homeless Connect (RHC) that street outreach workers are finding increasing numbers of Richmond residents who are first-time homeless and do not require complex supports. Homelessness in this population is caused by housing unaffordability.

¹ https://hsa-bc.ca/2023_Homeless_Counts.html

Approach

The RPRC proposes a two-pronged approach to help manage the homeless crisis for the short term and makes recommendations for future needs.

1. Rapid Housing Initiative (RHI) priority for first-time homeless (seniors, women, children, and youth).
2. Sufficient full-time After-Hours Street Outreach workers to connect our homeless residents to food, shelter, and other necessary services.

Recommendations

The RPRC membership reviewed the December 19th staff report, focusing on Tables 6, 7, and 8 and recommends the following initiatives:

Table 6 notes *“Rapid Housing Initiative Affordable Housing Project - 25 units.”*

- Priority for tenancy should be the first-time homeless such as seniors, and/or women and children and youth.
- To find tenants, the City and operator should collaborate with Richmond Cares Richmond Gives (RCRG) as they are already partnering with Seniors Services Society² and their SHINE program.

Table 7 notes *“Recently Council Approved Resources to Respond to Homelessness”* and two regular full time homelessness outreach workers.

- The outreach workers should be on the street and work after-hours and weekends.

Table 8 *“Potential Additional Resources to Further Expand the City’s Response to Homelessness”* notes a proposal for two additional regular full time City staff (Coordinator and Planner).

- The budget of \$561,000 is adequate but solely for crisis intervention.
- There is a role for coordination and research, albeit of lesser priority.
- Coordinator and Planner should be RPT positions or subsumed into a current position.
- The two RPT street outreach workers should be increased to full time.

Category of services

The Table 8 proposal should be fulfilled with an **Open Call** contract request for services from experienced non-profit societies. The RPRC liaises with many Metro Vancouver-based organizations that have decades of proven experience and competence in homelessness management and coordination.

² <https://www.seniorsservicesociety.ca/about/>

- The Open Call for workers should emphasize experience over credentials.
- The Open Call should include sending the contract offer to the organizations below and others.

Metro Housing and Outreach Non-Profit Societies³

Metro Housing & Outreach	Website	Phone	Email
Chimo Community Services Society	www.chimoservices.com	604.279.7077	chimo@chimoservices.com
Community Builders	https://www.communitybuilders.ca/	778.379.3940	info@communitybuilders.ca
Lookout Housing + Health Society	https://lookoutsociety.ca/	604.255.0340	info@lookoutsociety.ca
McLaren Housing Society	http://mclarenhousing.com/	604.669.4090	info@mclarenhousing.org
New Chelsea Society	www.newchelsea.ca	604.395.4370	admin@newchelsea.ca
Night Shift Ministries	https://nightshiftministries.org	604.953.1114	
PHS Community Services Society	https://www.phs.ca	604.683.0073	Info@phs.ca
Progressive Housing Society	https://progressivehousing.net/	604.522.9669	info@progressivehousing.net
RainCity Housing and Support Society	www.raincityhousing.org	604.662.7023	info@raincityhousing.org
Sanford Housing Society	http://sanfordhs.ca/	604.732.5105	
Seniors Services Society of BC	www.seniorsservicesociety.ca	604.520.6621	
The Bloom Group Community Services Society	https://www.thebloomgroup.org	604.606.0300	nfo@thebloomgroup.org
The Kettle Friendship Society	https://www.thekettle.ca/	604.251.2801	
Turning Point Recovery Society	https://www.turningpointrecovery.com/	604.303.6844	Administration

³ <https://hsa-bc.ca/>

Union Gospel Mission	https://www.ugm.ca/	604.253.3323	contact@ugm.ca
Whole Way House	https://wholewayhouse.ca/	236.866.3572	inquiries@wholewayhouse.ca

Finally, regarding “*Richmond Community Homelessness Table*” (page CNCL-77) and the option to establish a sub-committee for ongoing support and information-sharing, the RPRC reviewed other working models from other Metro cities and can offer these examples:

- City of Vancouver <https://vancouver.ca/parks-recreation-culture/carnegie-centre-outreach-programs.aspx>
- City of Burnaby <https://www.burnaby.ca/our-city/projects/mayors-task-force-unsheltered-community-members>
- Tri-Cities Homelessness & Housing Task Force <https://tricityshomelessness.ca/>

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the city of Richmond Staff report on Homelessness in Richmond. Should you have any comments or questions please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned at de_whalen@hotmail.com or 604.230.3138.

Sincerely,

Deirdre Whalen
President, RPRC

cc. RPRC Directors and Members