

REPORT

Climate Action, Planning and Development and Parks and Recreation Departments

To: Mayor Johnstone and Members of Council
Date: October 16, 2023

From: Jackie Teed, Acting Director,
Climate Action, Planning and
Development
File: 13.2630.08

Dean Gibson, Director,
Parks and Recreation
Item #: 2023-654

Subject: Update on Council Motion Regarding “The Right Person, the Right Time, The Right Place”

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Council direct staff to reach out to the Century House Association to share information related aging in place in New Westminister and to inform the latter of engagement opportunities related to policy, planning and development processes.

That Council direct staff to consult with the Century House Association on senior government advocacy with a focus on New Westminister and to report back on specific initiatives and potential financial and staff work program implications.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is fourfold: (1) to provide an update on the Council motion regarding the report entitled “The Right Person, the Right Time, the Right Place;” (2) to document past and current City initiatives related to the report’s cited municipal recommendations; (3) to seek Council direction to consult with the Century House Association on senior government advocacy initiatives; and (4) to report back on possible next steps and potential financial and staff work program implications.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On June 12, 2023, Council endorsed a motion for staff to report back on: (1) the opportunities to action the municipal recommendations presented in the Century House Association report entitled *The Right Person, the Right Time, the Right Place* (September 2021); and (2) the opportunities to develop a senior government advocacy strategy to support the additional recommendations as contained in the report.

The cited report addressed the “state of long-term care in Canada” and was based on a webinar which was held on September 22, 2021 and involved four panelists and 76 participants. Both the webinar and the report were funded by the United Way of the Lower Mainland, with support from the City of New Westminster and the Century House Association. The report included 28 recommendations directed at all levels of government, including four related to municipal government, and three actions related to senior government advocacy.

While the focus of the report was on long-term care, its scope was much broader and included general care for the elderly. It called for systems change with an emphasis on aging in place, with residential settings being a final option. It also called for greater recognition for informal caregivers and a living wage for formal caregivers. Additionally, it called for more affordable care, including dementia and respite, and that access be more timely and responsive.

The report was not specific to New Westminster, and many of the recommendations fall under the jurisdiction of senior government. Regarding the four recommendations related to municipal government, the City has made significant progress with regard to each one. As for senior government advocacy, the actions are broad as they involve national initiatives and scope, and will likely need to be more focused on and specific to New Westminster. If not, they will have a major impact on work programs within Community Planning and Parks and Recreation, and will likely require significant funding to retain consultant services or hire new staff.

BACKGROUND

Previous Council Direction

At the June 12, 2023 Regular Meeting, Council endorsed the following motion:

Whereas June 5 to 11 is Seniors Week providing an opportunity to honour and celebrate seniors contributions and acknowledge the integral part seniors play in communities across British Columbia.

And whereas, The City, working with seniors, has been a leader in policy to assure seniors in our community have the supports they need to thrive, such as the Age-Friendly Community Strategy, Dementia-Friendly Community Action Plan, the development of a Seniors Engagement Toolkit and other resources to optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security.

And whereas our recently adopted Strategic Plan includes a focus on New Westminster Community Belonging and Connecting as well as Homes and Housing Options

*And whereas the Century House Association produced a report entitled *The Right Person, the Right Time, the Right Place*, which addresses critical issues presented in a webinar titled *Long Term Care - Time for Change*, organized with the BC Healthy Coalition, which featured *The Provincial Seniors Advocate, Simon Fraser University Department of Gerontology Professor Emerita, and Fraser Health Authority Board Chair*, with recommendations to local and senior levels of governments that prioritized supports for seniors to age in place.*

Therefore be it resolved

*That staff provide a report back to Council on opportunities to action the local government recommendations presented in the Century House Association report *The Right Person, the Right Time, the Right Place*; and,*

That staff work with the Century House Association, the Senior Services Society and other New Westminster senior support agencies to develop a senior government advocacy strategy to support the additional recommendations in the report.

ANALYSIS

The document entitled *The Right Person, the Right Time, the Right Place* addresses the “state of long-term care in Canada” and is based on a webinar. Both the webinar and the report were funded by the United Way of the Lower Mainland, with support from the City of New Westminster and the Century House Association.

The webinar was held on September 22, 2021 and was attended by 76 participants from across Metro Vancouver. The webinar included the following four panelists: Andre Picard, Health Columnist with the Globe and Mail; Gloria Gutman, Professor Emerita with Simon Fraser University; Isabel Mackenzie, the Seniors Advocate for British Columbia; and Jim Sinclair, Chair of the Board of Directors, Fraser Health Authority.

While the focus of the webinar was on long-term care, the report’s scope is much broader and included general care for the elderly. It called for systems change with an emphasis on aging in place, with residential settings being a final option. It also called for greater recognition for informal caregivers and a living wage for formal caregivers. Additionally, it called for more affordable care, including dementia and respite, and that access be more timely and responsive.

The report included 28 recommendations directed at all levels of government, including four related to municipal government, and three actions related to senior government advocacy.

DISCUSSION

Identified Municipal Recommendations

The following discusses the City actions and initiatives which address the report's four identified municipal recommendations.

1. *That the City of New Westminster entrench in the Official Community Plan that housing and care for seniors be adequate and accessible according to need and ability to pay.*

The City's *Official Community Plan* (October 2017) includes a policy to "facilitate access to affordable and non-market housing for low- to moderate-income households." It also includes an action "to implement and monitor the Adaptable Housing Policy." Council's *2023-2026 Strategic Priorities Plan* includes a focus on "Homes and Housing Options," and incorporates an objective to "implement policies and procedures to further support the delivery and maintenance of homes that meet our community's diverse needs." It also incorporates an outcome to "collaborate with senior government to facilitate the construction of new affordable housing units." Additionally, the City's Climate Action, Planning and Development Department is prioritizing affordable housing, and taking steps to expedite and simplify the development approvals process in support of this objective. These plans and policies, which focus on affordable, adaptable and diverse housing types benefit older adults and seniors and facilitate aging in place.

2. *That the City of New Westminster promotes the development of seniors housing in naturally occurring retirement communities close to transit, and amenities at a walkable distance.*

The City's *Official Community Plan* (October 2017) includes a policy to "create neighbourhoods with housing options for people of all ages, abilities and household types to meet their changing needs." The City's *Master Transportation Plan* (May 2015) includes a number of policies and actions related to a "Walkable City," a number of which address pedestrian safety and accessibility. The City is seeking to develop diverse and integrated neighbourhoods, where older adults and seniors can meet their varied and changing needs, and not focusing these demographic groups in one or more neighbourhoods or areas of the city.

3. *That the City of New Westminster be advocates for ensuring that seniors' needs are being met to support healthy active aging.*

The City is seen as a municipal leader with regard addressing the needs of older adults and seniors and facilitating aging in place. It was the first municipality in British Columbia to develop a *Dementia-Friendly Community Action Plan* (February 2016), which was followed by the development of an *Age-Friendly Community Strategy* (April 2017). The City was officially recognized as an Age-Friendly British Columbia Community in 2018. At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the City

established a Seniors and Persons with Disabilities Task Force, which was instrumental in addressing a variety of needs arising from this provincial health emergency. Regarding the above cited strategy, the City will commence work on a new one starting in early-2025.

The City has also been an advocate for older adults and seniors, including participating in the Seniors Housing Collaborative, which was funded by the Vancouver Foundation and hosted by the Seniors Services Society. This initiative brought together senior serving organizations and seniors from across Metro Vancouver to collaboratively plan and develop policy recommendations to support aging in place for low-income seniors living in rental housing. The City is also participating in the Hey Neighbour Collective, which is working to increase social connectedness, community engagement and resilience in multi-unit buildings, including related to older adults and seniors.

- 4. *That in light of climate change, which included the heat dome of June 2021 an emergency response plan be put in place to prevent loss of life amongst the elderly and the frail.*

The City has undertaken numerous actions related to extreme heat, with a focus on vulnerable populations, including older adults, seniors and persons with disabilities. This includes a plan and a public information campaign which includes activation of cooling centres during extreme heat events. The City has also partnered on Connect and Prepare, which addresses social connectedness and emergency preparedness, which was initially focused on Ross Tower but is being expanded out to other seniors independent living residences and purpose-built market rental buildings. Additionally, the City participated in a podcast focused on emergency preparedness, with specific information to extreme heat.

Identified Senior Government Advocacy Actions

The following senior government advocacy actions are broad as they involve national initiatives and scope, and will likely need to be more focused on and specific to New Westminster. If not, they will have a major impact on work programs within Community Planning and Parks and Recreation, and will likely require significant funding to retain consultant services or hire new staff. Given this, there would be benefit in reaching out to the Century House Association to refine the identified actions prior to reporting back to Council with regard to financial and work program implications.

- 1. *That a public education program including print, radio and social media is developed to educate the public of the importance of reform in care for the elderly.*
- 2. *That organizations and individuals unite to organize and implement a day of action across Canada on Seniors Day, to draw attention to the fractured nature of the current system of care for the elderly in this country. The Right Person, the Right Time, the Right Place.*

3. *That seniors, seniors organizations and the general public advocate for needed reform to care of the elderly. Spread this report widely and encourage implementation of its contents. Send to local Members of Parliament and Members of the Legislative Assemblies.*

Possible Work Program Implications

If Council directs staff to review plans and polices, including the *Official Community Plan*, and to develop a senior government advocacy strategy to support the additional recommendations in the identified report, several of which are national in scope, then the following are the possible work program implications for Community Planning and Parks and Recreation.

Community Planning

1. Pause work on submitting grant applications under the Child Care BC New Spaces Fund for 51 Elliot Street and 65 East Sixth Avenue. These grant applications are time sensitive and require substantial staff time; or,
2. retain the services of a consultant to conduct a review of plans and policies, including the *Official Community Plan*.

Parks and Recreation

3. Pause work on extending recreation programs for 55+ populations into all facilities for 2024; or,
4. retain the services of a consultant or hire a regular temporary assistant program coordinator to both facilitate senior government advocacy and to extend recreation programs for 55+ populations into all facilities for 2024; and,
5. cover the costs of media and print design and distribution.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The financial implications are as follows:

- retain a consultant in the amount of \$5,000 to undertake the work required under #2 of the possible work program implications.
- retain a consultant in the amount of \$50,000 or hire a regular temporary assistant program coordinator in the amount of \$66,000, plus benefits, to undertake the work required under #4 of the possible work program implications.
- Cover the cost of related expenses in the amount of \$5,000 which is required under #5 of possible work program implications.

OPTIONS

The following options are presented for Council’s consideration:

- 1. That Council direct staff to reach out to the Century House Association to share information related aging in place in New Westminster and to inform the latter of engagement opportunities related to policy, planning and development processes.
- 2. That Council direct staff to consult with the Century House Association on senior government advocacy for the purpose of focusing initiatives on New Westminster and ensuring that they do not adversely impact the work programs of Community Planning and Parks and Recreation.
- 3. That Council direct staff to pause the identified work program items in Community Planning and Parks and Recreation or retain consultant and staff resources in order to review plans and policies, including the *Official Community Plan*, and to develop a senior government advocacy strategy to support the additional recommendations in the report, several of which are national in scope.
- 4. That Council direct staff not to proceed with any further work on the Council motion of June 12, 2023 regarding the report entitled “The Right Person, the Right Time, the Right Place.”
- 5. That Council provide staff with other direction.

Staff recommends option 1 and 2.

APPROVALS

This report was prepared by:
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This report was reviewed by:
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This report was approved by:
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