



Attachment #1

Covid 19 Task Forces Update:

March 2 to April 19, 2022

COVID-19 Task Forces: Update – March 2 – April 19, 2022

Vulnerable and At Risk Populations

Expanded Homeless Outreach, Referral and Advocacy Services

The City, in response to two funding requests from the COVID-19 At-Risk and Vulnerable Populations Task Force, allocated \$90,000 in 2021/22 and \$90,000 in 2022 for expanded homeless outreach, referral and advocacy services. Based on a request for proposals and a subsequent evaluation, Lookout Housing and Health Society was the successful proponent. More specifically, they have been contracted to provide two homeless outreach workers whose primary responsibility is to work with the Police Vulnerable Liaison Officer Team and Integrated Services (Bylaw Enforcement) in addressing issues related to homelessness, including making referrals to community services and emergency shelter. The two workers have shifts which incorporate evening and weekend hours, and the City is exploring senior government funding opportunities to continue their work beyond the end of 2022.

Development of a New 24/7 Emergency Response Centre Shelter

The City and BC Housing are working towards a new 24/7 Emergency Response Centre (ERC) shelter, which offers meals and support services, on the lower floor of the former Army and Navy Department Store at 502 Columbia Street. Currently, this space accommodates an Extreme Weather Response Program shelter which operates from November 1 to March 31, and is activated during extreme weather events. To facilitate a 24/7 ERC shelter, there is a need for building upgrades and additional sanitation services. To this end, BC Housing has engaged a Code Consultant and is willing to cover the majority of the costs associated with two sanitation trailers, each containing three sinks and toilets, and two showers.

The 24/7 ERC shelter, if operationalized, will be in place for one-year and will provide 50 beds. Anticipated occupancy is May 2022, with the possibility of a nightly shelter (i.e., 8:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m.) operating in the interim. The 24/7 ERC shelter will address the increased numbers of unsheltered, with much of this increase attributable to the COVID-19 pandemic, until new supportive housing is developed at 60 to 68 Sixth Street.

Preparation of New Homelessness Action Strategy

The Homelessness Action Strategy, which will be forwarded to Council for endorsement in principle in June 2022, provides a five-year vision and plan for addressing homelessness and associated issues in New Westminster. More specifically, it incorporates a vision of a desired future where all residents can locate affordable and secure housing; where there is an adequate income and opportunities for employment, including supported, to maintain this housing; and where there are services and support to address underlying issues which may jeopardize this housing. It reinforces the sentiment that “everyone needs a home and everyone needs to belong.”

The action plan builds on this vision, and the three components addressed within it. In total, it incorporates about 40 actions, from immediate- and short-term ones that can be achieved with minimal resources and build traction and momentum, to longer-term ones that require significant resources, and necessitate collaboration and partnership with the senior levels of government. Collectively, the actions are intended to meet the diverse needs of the unsheltered; ensuring that facilities, programs, services and supports are responsive to those needs, and that barriers to access are eliminated or significantly reduced.

Seniors and Persons Living with Disabilities

Friendly Caller Program

At the onset of COVID, the Task Force created the Friendly Caller Program for seniors forced to live in isolation the opportunity to socialize. Since that time, many of the programs and services that were initially cancelled in our community have resumed, which has once again opened the door for seniors to experience socialization in their daily lives.

It was determined that this program would be suspended until such time that it is needed again. The Century House Association Peer Support program (formerly Peer Counselling) will continue to support the remaining participants moving forward.

Food Securement

The Food Program continues at the Legion Manner allowing to better reach the vulnerable seniors population with 50 meals being distributed every Tuesday and Thursday. This includes those community members that were being served when the program took place at Century House.

Childcare

The Child Care Working Group continues to provide opportunities for networking for community stakeholders. It is comprised of interdepartmental City staff and representatives from local child care and family serving organizations that support child care in City of New Westminster.

The following are the information that was shared with the stakeholders:

- The City has been awarded funding under the provincial Childcare BC New Spaces Fund, to retrofit the current three to five (30 months to school age) care space at the Queensborough Community Centre to accommodate up to 25 school age care spaces. It is anticipated that this work will occur in September 2022, with the space being ready for occupancy in October or November 2022.
- The City's Child Care Task Force continues to provide support around child care needs that families and operators face. Most recently the Task Force published the Key Child Care Funding Supports Resources. The Task Force is
- The Child Care Task Force Queensborough sub-committee, comprised of the City, the School District and Westminster Children's After School Society (WCAS), continues to explore options for new group school age care spaces in Queensborough.
- The Parks and Recreation Department continues to explore a recreational-based program which could provide flexible option for families with school age children. The program could be operational in Queensborough by September 2022.
- The Seamless Day Kindergarten pilot program has expanded to include SD40 centered on the use of existing classrooms outside of school hours. The program has been demonstrated to be a success and School District staff are exploring opportunities to expand the program to additional schools in the district.
- The City continues to move forward on several non-profit child care projects, including, 331 Richmond Street, 490 Furness Street and the tēmōsew̱txʷ Aquatic and Community Centre.
- The City continues to negotiate for non-profit child care facilities and spaces as part of several private developments where the developer is seeking increased density.
- The City continues to permit group child care in most commercial, mixed use and multiple-dwelling districts subject to certain conditions.

- The City's website also serves as a link for families to all information and resources related to child care in the city. It is updated regularly and can be found on the COVID 19-Response Working Group web portal found here.

May is Child Care Month. Again the committee will be doing a proclamation and will also acknowledge child care educators through a social media post and exploring a pebble and ripple themed message.

Last year post had a garden themed message:

A big thank you to all New West child care providers! Thank you for your dedication in supporting our families, nurturing our children, and strengthening our community. Join us in recognizing these essential workers – today and every day!