

## **Attachment #1**

### *Supportive Policies and Need*

## **Supportive Policies and Need – 350 to 366 Fenton St and 68 Sixth St**

### *Supportive Policies – 350 to 366 Fenton Street*

#### **Affordable Housing Strategy (2010):**

Strategic Direction #3 is to “Facilitate community partnerships”. Two of the actions within Strategic Direction #3 are directly relevant to this project:

- *Provide assistance to non-market housing providers by leasing City-owned land and making grants available where opportunities arise.*
- *Implement proposal calls to non-profit operators for housing that targets special needs groups that may be under-served in the community. This would involve partnership with other levels of government and identification of priority target groups.*

#### **Queensborough Community Plan (2014)**

This project aligns with Policy 7.1, which is to “Facilitate the provision of affordable housing options”. Specifically, this project aligns with action 7.1a, which states that:

- *City should continue to implement the strategic directions of the City’s Affordable Housing Strategy.*

#### **Small Sites Affordable Housing Projects:**

In order to help address the housing crisis in the region, the City is actively pursuing creative approaches to providing affordable housing in New Westminster. Through the Small Sites Affordable Housing Program, the City offers City-owned sites to affordable housing providers for the development of secure below and non-market housing.

#### **Community Poverty Reduction Strategy (2016):**

This project aligns with section 7.3 (Housing and Shelter) of the City’s Community Poverty Reduction Strategy. In particular, this project aligns with the following actions:

- *That the City continue to implement its Affordable Housing Strategy (2010), which includes actions in support of developing affordable, non-market and rental housing.*
- *That the City continue to work with BC Housing to address the needs of low and moderate income households, as well as vulnerable populations such as Indigenous peoples, new immigrants and refugees.*
- *That the City explore partnerships and additional sites for affordable housing.*

## **Official Community Plan (2017):**

This project aligns with Policy 8.2 of the City's Official Community Plan, which is:

- *Facilitate access to affordable and non-market housing for low to moderate income households.*

Specifically, this project aligns with actions 8.2b and 8.2c:

- *The City should continue to implement the Affordable Housing Strategy.*
- *The City should continue to partner with seniors governments, charitable foundations, faith groups and non-profit organizations in the development of affordable and non-market housing.*

## **New Westminster City Council 2019-2022 Strategic Plan (2019):**

This project aligns with the Affordable Housing strategic priority and the Reconciliation, Inclusion and Engagement strategic priority.

Specifically, with the Affordable Housing strategic priority, this project aligns with the following key directions:

- *Aggressively pursue creative approaches to housing policy and on-the ground projects to transform the way housing is provided in New Westminster.*
- *Use partnerships, negotiations with developers and leveraging of City resources to secure development of below and non-market housing.*

In regards to the Reconciliation, Inclusion and Engagement strategic priority, this project aligns with the following key directions:

- *Continue to monitor, evaluate and respond to emerging community and social issues.*
- *Actively and meaningfully engage with Indigenous nations, bands, communities and individuals to develop enduring relationships.*

## **Supportive Policies – 68 Sixth Street**

### **Homeless Action Strategy and Implementation Plan (2006)**

This project addresses the issue of homelessness that is the centre of the Homeless Action Strategy and Implementation Plan through action 15 from this Strategy and Plan.

- *The City of New Westminster to take leadership to assist with meeting affordable housing needs through various means such as fast tracking of development applications where there are benefits to the City.*

The City is commencing work on a new Homelessness Action Strategy, in which supportive housing will be an important consideration.

### **Downtown Community Plan (2010)**

This project relates to section 8.0 (Community Well-Being). Specifically, it address strategy 8.5 of section 8.0:

- *Address the needs and issues related to homelessness, including business and resident concerns related to street homelessness and its associated impacts.*

Within strategy 8.5, it addresses the following actions:

- *Develop a continuum of housing, including emergency shelter beds as entry points or gateways, and longer-term supportive housing, to permanently transition people out of homelessness.*
- *Facilitate the provision of adequate emergency shelter and supportive housing.*

### **Community Poverty Reduction Strategy (2016):**

This project aligns with section 7.3 (Housing and Shelter) of the City's Community Poverty Reduction Strategy. In particular, this project aligns with the following actions:

- *That the City continue to work with BC Housing to address the needs of low and moderate income households, as well as vulnerable populations such as Indigenous peoples, new immigrants and refugees.*
- *That the City explore partnerships and additional sites for affordable housing.*

### **Official Community Plan (2017)**

This project aligns with Policy 8.1 of the City's Official Community Plan, which is:

- *Facilitate the creation and maintenance of housing that offers options to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.*

### **New Westminster City Council 2019-2022 Strategic Plan (2019):**

This project aligns with the Affordable Housing strategic priority and the Reconciliation, Inclusion and Engagement strategic priority.

Specifically, with the Affordable Housing strategic priority, this project aligns with the following key direction:

- *Explore strategies to reduce homelessness, including developing opportunities for supportive housing.*

## *Identification of Need – 350-366 Fenton Street*

The need for housing for Indigenous residents of New Westminster (the group to be served by the proposal for 350 to 366 Fenton Street) is noted as follows:

### **Higher rates of low income among Indigenous residents:**

According to the 2016 Census, 20.1% of Indigenous residents in New Westminster lived in low-income households in 2015 (based on LIM-AT), compared with 15.6% of all residents. Specifically, there were 460 Indigenous residents in low-income households in New Westminster in 2015. Additionally, there were higher rates of low-income among Indigenous children 0-17 years old (19.5% based on LIM—AT) compared with all children 0-17 years old in New Westminster (16.6%) in 2015. Specifically, there were 80 Indigenous children 0-17 years old in low-income households in New Westminster in 2015.

### **Higher rates of being in lone parent families among Indigenous children:**

According to the 2016 Census, 37.3% of Indigenous children 0-14 years old in New Westminster lived in lone parent households, compared with 14.8% of all children 0-14 years old in New Westminster. Specifically, there were 110 Indigenous children 0-14 years old in New Westminster in lone parent households.

### **Higher rates of homelessness among Indigenous peoples:**

According to the 2020 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count, there were at least 22 Indigenous homeless people in New Westminster. As only 71 out of 123 homeless count respondents in New Westminster answered the question on Indigenous identity and as homelessness has likely increased considerably since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, this number is likely a significant undercount. Furthermore, Indigenous homeless people composed 31.0% of the homeless population (based on who answered the question on Indigenous identity) in New Westminster, whereas Indigenous people composed 3.3% of New Westminster's population in the 2016 Census.

### **Lack of Indigenous-specific housing in New Westminster:**

There is currently no existing Indigenous-specific housing in New Westminster, despite New Westminster having 2,295 Indigenous residents according to the 2016 Census. There is currently no existing Indigenous-specific housing in Metro Vancouver outside of First Nations Reserves, the City of Surrey and the City of Vancouver, despite 61,455 Indigenous residents residing in Metro Vancouver according to the 2016 Census.

### **Long waitlist for affordable housing in New Westminster:**

in June 2020, there were 562 households (all households of all ethnic backgrounds) on the BC Housing Wait List in New Westminster, compared with 435 households in June 2015. Furthermore, there were 200 family households (all family households of all ethnic backgrounds) on the BC Housing Wait List in June 2020 in New Westminster, compared with 138 family households in June 2015.

**Large future demand for non-market rental housing:**

According to the City's Housing Needs Report, there will be a total estimated non-market rental demand of 1,290 units between 2021 and 2026 in New Westminster.

***Identification of Need – 68 Sixth Street***

The need for supportive housing for people experiencing homelessness in New Westminster (which would be partially addressed through the 68 Sixth Street project) is documented below:

**Large homeless population in both Metro Vancouver and New Westminster:**

According to the 2020 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count, there were 3,634 people experiencing homelessness in Metro Vancouver and 123 people experiencing homelessness in New Westminster. Among these 123 people in New Westminster, 41 were unsheltered, while 82 were sheltered (including 11 who were in extreme weather response shelters during the Count and likely would have been unsheltered if the extreme weather alert was not in effect during the Count). The actual number of people experiencing homelessness in Metro Vancouver and New Westminster is likely much larger than shown in the Homeless Count, as homeless counts are widely acknowledged as undercounts.

**Increasing rate of homelessness calls for service to Licencing and Integrated Services:**

in 2020, there were more than twice as many homelessness calls for service made to the City's Licencing and Integrated Services Division, with 152 calls in 2020 compared with 66 calls in 2019. In 2021 to date (January 1–August 31), there have been 144 homelessness calls for service, much higher than during the same period in 2019 (38 homelessness calls for service) and 2020 (114 homelessness calls for service).

**Homelessness is very expensive to society compared with providing housing to people experiencing homelessness:**

A 2005 study by Pomeroy in Canada found that the cost of unsheltered homelessness costs \$66,000 to \$120,000 per year (from higher rates of hospitalization and incarceration compared with people living in supportive housing) per unsheltered person whereas providing supportive and transitional housing cost \$13,000 to \$18,000 per year per person. Given that this study is 16 years old, it is likely that the discrepancy between the costs has increased considerably due to inflation. Furthermore, with the medical system (hospitals, etc.) in British Columbia (and elsewhere in Canada) under significant pressure due to COVID-19 and the overdose epidemic, providing supportive housing would help to alleviate some extra pressure on the health care system due to lower hospitalization rates of people experiencing homelessness once they are housed.

## *Other Crises*

The challenging situation facing Indigenous residents (who would be housed at 350-366 Fenton Street) and residents experiencing homelessness (who would be housed at 68 Sixth Street) is compounded by three concurrent crises: the COVID-19 pandemic, the overdose epidemic, and the housing affordability crisis.

### **COVID-19 Pandemic:**

After significant decreases in COVID-19 cases in late Spring/early Summer 2021, COVID-19 cases have now increased in New Westminster and provincially as part of a fourth wave of COVID-19. In August 2021, New Westminster had 171 new COVID-19 cases, a large increase from the 23 new COVID-19 cases in July 2021. The COVID-19 pandemic has taken a significant toll on British Columbia's health care system and resident health: as of September 14, 2021, there have been 9,227 COVID-19 related hospitalizations in British Columbia since the beginning of the pandemic, as well as 1,866 confirmed COVID-19 related deaths in British Columbia. A report entitled "What we heard: Indigenous Peoples and COVID-19: Public Health Agency of Canada's companion report", Indigenous peoples in Canada faced additional challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic including a lack of affordable and safe homes, with the pandemic exacerbating issues of inadequate housing and homelessness and racism and a lack of cultural safety in the health care system. According to the "Guidance for providers of services for people experiencing homelessness (in the context of COVID-19)" produced by the Federal Government of Canada, "those who experience homelessness may be at higher risk of contracting COVID-19 or developing complications due to COVID-19 barriers to accessing traditional services and standard resources." Furthermore, according to this Federal Government of Canada report, "those who experience homelessness may also be at higher risk of developing complications due to COVID-19, as they are more likely to report having an underlying chronic condition (particularly asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and heart conditions) compared to the general population."

### **Overdose Epidemic:**

Starting in the mid-2010s, increased concentrations of fentanyl and carfentanil in the illicit drug supply resulted in increasing numbers of drug toxicity deaths and drug toxicity overdoses responded to by first responders in British Columbia and Canada. Various programs in British Columbia resulted in some progress in decreasing drug toxicity deaths in 2019. However, the physical distancing requirements of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021 and an increasingly toxic drug supply, as well as the social isolation and mental health impacts of the pandemic, resulted in a sharp increase in drug toxicity deaths and drug toxicity overdoses in 2020 and 2021 compared with 2019. In 2020, 35 New Westminster residents died of drug toxicity, compared with 20 in 2019. Based on January to June 2021 data, both New Westminster (projected 48 deaths for all of 2021 based on 24 deaths in the first six months of 2021) and British Columbia (projected 2,039 deaths for all of 2021 based on 1,011 deaths in the first six months of 2021) are on track for record high numbers of drug toxicity deaths in 2021. Furthermore, BC Ambulance attended 275 drug toxicity events (overdoses) in New Westminster from

January to June 2021. Indigenous residents are especially at risk for drug toxicity deaths: in 2020 in British Columbia, First Nations people died of drug toxicity at a rate that was 5.3 times higher than the general population with 254 First Nations people dying of drug toxicity in British Columbia in 2020. People experiencing homelessness are also at increased risk of drug toxicity deaths: a study from the BC Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General and the BC Coroner's Service in 2016 and 2017, found that 9% of all people who died from drug toxicity in British Columbia in those years were homeless. According to data from Statistics Canada Population Estimates and the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness Research Paper, "The State of Homelessness in Canada 2016", approximately 0.7% of Canadians experienced homelessness in 2016. Assuming a similar proportion of the population experienced homelessness during that year in British Columbia (as in Canada), this means that people experiencing homelessness were 12.9 times more likely to die of drug toxicity than residents of British Columbia as a whole.

### **Housing Affordability Crisis:**

Compounding the above two challenges is the housing affordability crisis. When the COVID-19 pandemic emergency was declared in March 2020, concerns about contracting the COVID-19 virus decreased the number of housing options for residents, including couch-surfing and finding roommates. However, housing affordability has been a challenge in New Westminister and Metro Vancouver long before the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the 2016 Census, 40.3% of tenant households in New Westminister spent 30% or more of their before-tax household income on housing costs. Finding market rental housing can be extremely difficult: according to Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, in October 2020, New Westminister had a rental vacancy rate of 1.6% (well below the bottom limit of 3.0% for a balanced vacancy rate). Getting into non-market rental housing is difficult as well, with 562 households on the BC Housing Wait List for New Westminister as of June 2020. For Indigenous residents of New Westminister, these challenges are compounded by higher poverty rates (according to the 2016 Census, 20.1% of Indigenous residents in New Westminister lived in low-income households in 2015 (based on LIM-AT), compared with 15.6% of all residents) and racism in the housing market (according to a survey by the Native Women's Association of Canada, 44.6% of participants in the survey in Canada had experienced discrimination from a landlord when trying to rent). For people experiencing homelessness in New Westminister, low incomes and a lack of supportive housing (according to BC Housing, there were 95 applicants on the BC Housing Supportive Housing Registry for New Westminister in September 2020, with actual demand likely much higher) are significant barriers to housing, as well as housing discrimination and other challenges.