

NO: **R210**

COUNCIL DATE: **September 10, 2012**

REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: **Mayor & Council**

DATE: **September 10, 2012**

FROM: **General Manager, Planning and Development**

FILE: **4815-01**

SUBJECT: **Winter Shelter for Surrey – BC Housing**

RECOMMENDATION

The Planning and Development Department recommends that Council:

1. Receive this report as information;
2. Authorize staff to locate an appropriate space for the operation of a 40-bed winter shelter that would be open from November 1, 2012 through March 31, 2013 (the "winter shelter"); and
3. Authorize staff to work with BC Housing toward having the winter shelter operating in Surrey over the winter of 2012/2013.

INTENT

The purpose of this report is to:

- inform Council of BC Housing's offer to fund a 40-bed winter shelter in Surrey that would provide an indoor place to sleep (on a mat) and meals for homeless people who are currently sleeping outdoors. BC Housing will cover the costs associated with the operation of the shelter on condition that the City of Surrey provides an appropriate space for the shelter at no cost to BC Housing; and
- seek Council approval for staff to work toward having the winter shelter operating in Surrey over the coming winter.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Addressing issues of homelessness has been identified as a corporate priority by the City of Surrey as it affects the quality of life and social sustainability of the community. It is one of the five priorities in the Plan for the Social Well-Being of Surrey Residents.

BACKGROUND

Surrey's current stock of permanent year-round shelter beds (85 beds) is insufficient to accommodate Surrey's homeless population, being approximately 400 homeless people based on the most recent counts.

Emergency Shelters in Surrey

Surrey has 85 permanent shelter beds in three facilities, as follows:

- 40 beds in the Gateway Shelter in Whalley;
- 35 beds in Hyland House in Newton; and
- 10 beds in the Cloverdale shelter.

A further 94 beds are available for women in safe/transition houses and another 10 beds are available for adolescents in the All Nations Youth Safe House. Surrey shelter operators report having to turn away homeless people in the winter due to insufficient capacity.

2011 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count

Homeless counts have been conducted in Metro Vancouver in 2002, 2005, 2008, and 2011. The count is a 24-hour point-in-time snapshot of the homeless population in the region. It consists of two parts: a nighttime count of people in sheltered facilities; and a daytime count of people who have slept outside, in camps or in vehicles or in other non-residential locations.

Results of the 2011 Homeless Count in Surrey show that:

- ***Surrey's homeless population has remained stable since 2005.*** There was a significant increase in Surrey's homeless population between 2002 and 2005 - from 171 people in 2002 to 392 in 2005. Since then it has remained stable, with 392 homeless people counted in 2005, 402 in 2008 and 400 in 2011. This is a positive result given the overall high population growth in Surrey over that period of time. Since 2006, 272 social housing units and 198 beds have been opened in Surrey which likely accounts for the fact that there has been no increase in Surrey's homeless population in recent years despite the City's rapid growth (i.e., 73,000 people between 2006 and 2011).
- ***Surrey has the highest number of unsheltered or street homeless in the region.*** The 2011 Homeless Count found 230 people unsheltered in Surrey, representing 58% of the homeless in Surrey. By comparison, in the City of Vancouver 154 people were unsheltered, representing 10% of Vancouver's homeless population.

The majority of unsheltered homeless individuals (82%) in Surrey were found in the Whalley area with the remainder being in Newton and Cloverdale.

Appendix I provides additional information from the *One Step Forward... Results of the 2011 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count*.

2011-2012 Metro Vancouver Extreme Weather Response

BC Housing's Extreme Weather Response ("EWR") Program was introduced in 2006 in communities such as Surrey, where the number of homeless people exceeds the available shelter beds. The EWR Program funds time-limited temporary shelters that operate as mats in churches and community agencies during periods when the temperature or weather conditions threaten the health and safety of homeless people. Last winter, Surrey/White Rock had a total capacity of 135 temporary EWR spaces in six locations across the community.

The 2011/2012 Surrey/White Rock EWR Plan defined "extreme weather" as:

- temperatures at or below 0 degrees Celsius;
- significant snow accumulation or sleet/freezing rain conditions;
- significant windstorms that may present danger to persons living in wooded areas and/or makeshift shelters (cardboard boxes or lean-tos); and/or
- periods of extended rain over three days creating conditions which make it difficult for people to keep dry.

The Surrey/White Rock EWR Coordinator decides when to call an "extreme weather alert" and which shelters will open on any given night of a response. In 2011/2012 in Surrey/White Rock, an extreme weather alert was called on 63 nights over the winter.

In 2011/2012, 3,234 person-nights of EWR service were provided in Surrey/White Rock, representing 59% of all EWR person-nights in Metro Vancouver. In comparison, there were 942 EWR person-nights used in the City of Vancouver. The *Metro Vancouver Extreme Weather Response: 2011-12 Evaluation* report notes that the provision of low barrier winter response shelter spaces in Vancouver has resulted in a reduced demand for EWR services in that community.

On an average night during extreme weather periods in 2011/2012, 51 people were accommodated on a mat at an extreme weather shelter in Surrey - 39 people at Surrey Urban Mission in Whalley, 7 people at Cloverdale Christian Fellowship, and 5 people at First United Church in White Rock.

Appendix II provides additional information from the *Metro Vancouver Extreme Weather Response: 2011-12 Evaluation*.

Master Plan for Housing the Homeless in Surrey

Over the past year, the City of Surrey has been working in partnership with BC Housing to develop a Master Plan for Housing the Homeless in Surrey (Corporate Report No. R129, June 27, 2011). The Plan will provide strategic direction for facilitating the provision of housing and services with sufficient capacity for people who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness in Surrey. The Plan focuses on the provision of supported housing, recognizing that permanent housing is critical to effectively address homelessness. The Master Plan for Housing the Homeless in Surrey will be forwarded to Council for consideration later this fall.

DISCUSSION

In recognition of the deficiency in permanent shelter beds to fully accommodate the homeless population in Surrey, in August 2012 BC Housing offered to provide operational funding for an additional temporary 40-bed (mats) winter shelter in Surrey subject to the City providing the space. Unlike extreme weather shelters that only open up when the temperature and weather conditions threaten the health and safety of homeless people, the winter shelter would be open every day from November 1, 2012 to March 31, 2013.

Winter shelters have been operating in the City of Vancouver since 2008 as part of the City's efforts to reduce street homelessness. The winter shelters (called winter response or HEAT shelters) have not only been effective in reducing the number of people sleeping outside but have

proven to be an effective entry point for street-entrenched homeless people to engage with health and housing supports to transition such people off the streets and into housing.

Winter Shelter

BC Housing is offering to provide the operating funding for a 40-bed (mats) winter shelter on the condition that the City provides the space at no charge. This includes covering the rent or lease payments (if the space is not owned by the City), utilities, and the cost of any renovations.

Space

Such a shelter space would need to meet the following requirements:

- Approximately 1,600 square feet is needed to accommodate a 40-bed shelter;
- The shelter should be located near known homeless populations and be on a transit route. In Vancouver, it was determined that winter shelters should not be located too close to permanent shelters;
- The shelter should include a minimum of two showers (four would be preferable), four washroom sinks and at least two toilets (more if possible);
- To accommodate meal service, the space needs to have a serving bar and fridge. Ideally, there would also be a stove/oven. If the intention is to have meals prepared on-site, there needs to be a full kitchen. With respect to most of the winter response shelters in Vancouver the meals are prepared off-site;
- The facility should be accessible, not only for client access, but also should accommodate cart storage; and
- Ideally, the space would have access to outdoor space that is not visible from the street.

Operations

Winter shelters are intended to be low barrier shelters for street-entrenched homeless men and women. Key features are as follows:

- The shelter is open 24 hours-a-day, seven days-a-week from November 1 to March 31;
- People sleep on mats and are provided with two to three meals per day;
- The shelter accommodates carts and other personal belongings;
- In the Vancouver shelters, pets are allowed to sleep with their owners and the SPCA is involved in helping to address any health issues with the pets (mostly dogs); and
- Health and housing outreach services are offered to people using the winter shelter in an effort to transition people into more permanent housing.

To allow a winter shelter to be up and running over the coming winter in Surrey, it will be necessary for staff to locate an appropriate space for the shelter. In the meantime, BC Housing will move forward with issuing a Request for Proposals for a non-profit operator for the shelter.

Winter Response Shelters in Vancouver

The City of Vancouver Mayor's Homeless Emergency Action Team (HEAT) and Winter Response low-barrier shelter initiative was initiated in 2008. The Vancouver winter response shelters are lower barrier than regular shelters. They provide mats for sleeping, three meals a day, space for safe storage of personal belongings, and they allow pets. The shelters are located in commercial and warehouse spaces.

The winter response shelters have proven to have a positive impact on reducing homelessness in Vancouver. The outcomes include:

- an 82% reduction in street homelessness in Vancouver (from 811 street homeless in 2008 to 145 in 2011);
- a dramatic reduction in reports of aggressive panhandling; and
- the transitioning of hundreds of chronically homeless people off the streets and into permanent housing and care. While not an expected outcome when the winter response shelters were introduced in 2008, their low barrier nature has demonstrated efficacy in getting street entrenched homeless people indoors and into contact with health care providers and housing staff.

SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS

The City's on-going efforts to address homelessness in Surrey assist in achieving the City of Surrey Sustainability Charter's scope action item SC5 that is focused on the implementation of the recommendations of the Plan for the Social Well-Being of Surrey Residents.

CONCLUSION

Based on the above discussion, it is recommended that Council:

- Authorize staff to locate an appropriate space for the operation of a 40-bed winter shelter that would be open from November 1, 2012 through March 31, 2013; and
- Authorize staff to work with BC Housing toward having the winter shelter operating in Surrey over the winter of 2012/2013.

Original signed by
Jean Lamontagne
General Manager,
Planning and Development

AM:saw

Attachments:

Appendix I *One Step Forward... Results of the 2011 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count*
Appendix II *Metro Vancouver Extreme Weather Response: 2011-12 Evaluation*

**One Step Forward
Results of the 2011 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count**

Table 1 illustrates the number of homeless people found in Surrey during the Metro Vancouver's Homeless Counts.

Table 1: Trends in Total Homeless Population in Surrey: 2002-2011				
Region	Total Homeless 2002	Total Homeless 2005	Total Homeless 2008	Total Homeless 2011
Surrey	171	392	402	400

Table 2 illustrates the number of homeless people that were found in a shelter bed and number who were unsheltered in each community. Surrey had the highest number of unsheltered homeless people of any community in the region.

Table 2: Total Sheltered and Unsheltered Homeless by Sub-region					
Sub-region	# Sheltered	Percent Sheltered	# Unsheltered	Percent Unsheltered	Total # Homeless
Burnaby	8	10%	70	90%	78
Delta	1	17%	5	83%	6
Langley	43	42%	60	58%	103
Maple Ridge	47	43%	63	57%	110
New Westminster	91	69%	41	31%	132
North Shore	67	55%	55	45%	122
Richmond	15	31%	34	69%	49
Surrey	170	42%	230	58%	400
Tri-Cities	20	42%	28	58%	48
Vancouver	1,427	90%	154	10%	1,581
White Rock	0	0	8	100%	8
Unspecified	3	23%	10	77%	13
TOTAL	1,892	71%	758	29%	2,650

Metro Vancouver Extreme Weather Response: 2011-12 Evaluation

Table 1 illustrates the number of spaces available in Surrey's six Extreme Weather Response (EWR) shelters in 2011/2012. In total, Surrey/White Rock could accommodate up to 135 homeless people during extreme weather periods.

Community	Sheltering Site	Address	Intake/closing	EWR spaces
Surrey/White Rock	Cloverdale Church	5770 175 St	8pm – 8am	15
	First United Church, White Rock	15385 Semiahmoo	11pm – 7am	15
	Hyland House	6595 King George Blvd	11pm – 7am	15
	NightShift Street Ministries	10759 135 St	8pm – 8am	20
	South Fraser Community Services	10697 135A St	11pm – 7am	10
	Surrey Urban Mission	13388 104 th Ave	7pm – 8am	60
				135

Table 2 illustrates the number of person-nights of EWR shelter use in communities during the winter of 2011/2012. Surrey had the highest person-nights of EWR shelter use of any community in Metro Vancouver.

Community	EWR Service Use by Sub-Region
Aboriginal – Van/Bby	
Burnaby	176
Delta	48
Langley	286
New Westminster	379
North Shore	216
Richmond	247
Surrey/White Rock	3,234
Tri-Cities	0
Vancouver	942
TOTAL	5,527

Table 3 illustrates the occupancy of four EWR shelters in Surrey.

Table 3: Capacity and Occupancy of Extreme Weather Response Shelters in 2011-2012					
Site	Capacity/night	Nights open	Total capacity	Occupancy #	Occupancy %
Cloverdale Christian Fellowship	15	62	930	419	45 ⁰ %
NightShift Street Ministries	20	3	60	26	43 ⁰ %
Surrey Urban Mission	60	63	3,780	2,465	65%
First United Church, White Rock	15	62	930	324	35 ⁰ %