



CITY OF RICHMOND
**HOMELESSNESS
STRATEGY**
2019–2029
2022 UPDATE



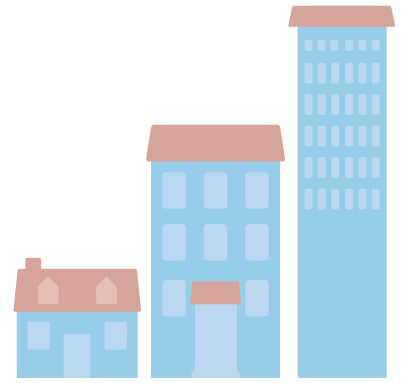


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INTRODUCTION

The City of Richmond Homelessness Strategy (2019–2029), adopted by City Council on September 9, 2019, is an action-oriented framework that guides City and stakeholder involvement in homelessness initiatives. The Homelessness Strategy is guided by the following vision statement:

By 2029, homelessness in Richmond is rare, brief and non-recurring. Richmond is an inclusive community that works in collaboration to provide a continuum of housing and support services.

To achieve this vision, the strategy outlines five strategic directions:

1. Prevent pathways into homelessness;
2. Support residents who are experiencing homelessness;
3. Provide pathways out of homelessness;
4. Foster collaboration and community-building among community partners; and
5. Communicate, research and monitor homelessness.

Under these strategic directions, the Homelessness Strategy identifies 32 actions with associated timelines and priorities to be completed over a 10-year period. The City of Richmond is committed to taking a leadership role to make homelessness in Richmond rare, brief and non-recurring. While municipal governments, or any one level of government alone, cannot solve homelessness, the City has taken significant steps, in collaboration with key community partners, to invest in an immediate response to homelessness and homelessness prevention.

There are many factors that may lead someone to experience homelessness, including lack of adequate income and access to affordable housing and health supports, and/or experiences related to discrimination. The number of individuals experiencing homelessness in Metro Vancouver is increasing, including in Richmond, according to Homeless Counts which have taken place across the region every three years since 2002. These counts provide statistics, trends and information about the general characteristics of individuals in the community who are experiencing homelessness to help provide a better understanding of this population over time. The counts are known to underestimate the number of people experiencing homelessness in each community, because they only capture information on individuals who are surveyed/counted within a particular 24-hour period. The 2020 Homeless Count identified 85 individuals experiencing homelessness in Richmond, though local service providers estimated the number to be higher. The next Homeless Count results are expected to be available in the fall of 2023.

Throughout 2022, the City and key stakeholders made significant progress towards advancing actions outlined in the Homelessness Strategy. The following section provides an overview of initiatives taken by the City and community partners over the past year. More information about the Homelessness Strategy, previous Homelessness Strategy Update Reports and additional homelessness resources are available on the City's website.

ROLE OF GOVERNMENTS AND SERVICE PROVIDERS

City of Richmond

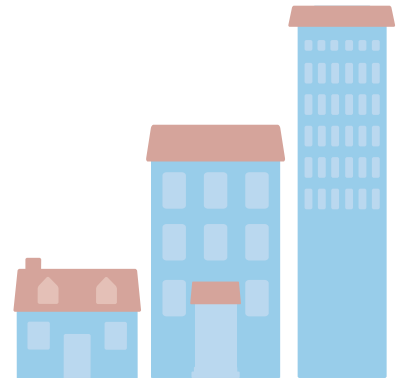
The City of Richmond is committed to working in partnership with senior levels of government and the private and non-profit sectors, to create the appropriate mix of housing and supportive services for a diverse population, including residents experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Recognizing that senior levels of government have the primary responsibility of providing funding for homelessness prevention programs, services and affordable housing, the City is committed to remaining a local leader that works with community organizations to ensure that homelessness in Richmond is rare, brief and non-recurring. Specifically, these roles include:

- Advocate: The City works with community organizations to advocate to senior levels of government for funding and programs that work to reduce homelessness.
- Analyst: The City monitors local data and best practice research regarding homelessness to update its policies and plans to reflect current and emerging trends.
- Communicator: The City uses best practice research to educate and promote the benefits of an inclusive and mixed income community and the necessity to create a compassionate, non-judgemental response to experiences of homelessness.
- Supporter: The City assists non-profit housing and service providers by facilitating collaboration, enabling capacity building, and providing financial and in-kind supports.
- Partner: The City collaborates and partners with senior levels of government and the private and non-profit sectors to develop a mix of affordable housing options.
- Planner: The City gathers information, research and feedback on community needs regarding residents at risk of or experiencing homelessness in order to create policy and implement actions that support housing and homelessness focused services in Richmond.

In addition, City facilities, including libraries and community centres, provide safe spaces where residents experiencing homelessness can connect socially with others and get information about other supports and services.

The Province of BC

BC Housing is the provincial Crown corporation responsible for providing funding and programs related to housing and homelessness. BC Housing funds various services, including shelter operations, homelessness prevention, outreach supports and services, and supportive housing projects for people at risk of or experiencing homelessness. The Province's *Belonging in BC: A Collaborative Plan to Prevent and Reduce Homelessness (2022–2025)* outlines strategic goals, commitments and actions including the creation of more homes to support people experiencing homelessness and new actions to reduce encampments.



The Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction (MSDPR) Community Integration Team plays an important role connecting vulnerable individuals, including those experiencing homelessness, with financial assistance and community supports. Services provided by MSDPR include assistance locating shelter spaces, case management and coordination of referrals to other services.

The Government of Canada

The federal government released *Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy* in 2019. The Reaching Home program prioritizes data-driven homelessness plans that aim to reduce and prevent homelessness at a local level. Funding to implement the Reaching Home program throughout the Greater Vancouver region was allocated through Lu'ma Native Housing Society. Reaching Home mandates that funded communities develop and implement community-driven homelessness plans, coordinated access to services, and homelessness management information systems that drive data-informed decisions to improve programs.

Lu'ma Native Housing Society, in collaboration with community organizations and government agencies across the Greater Vancouver region, is developing and will be implementing a coordinated access and referral system through the Reaching Home program. A coordinated access system, which provides standardized procedures for client intake and assessment of need along with a community-wide housing support service database, is anticipated to be implemented across the region in 2023.

Non-Profit, Social Service and Faith-Based Organizations

Non-profit, social service and faith-based organizations play a critical role in supporting the needs of residents experiencing homelessness. These organizations deliver critical shelter and supportive services to clients to help promote independence, success in achieving housing stability and full participation in the community. Accordingly, the City of Richmond supports non-profit, social services and faith-based organizations in their effort to meet the needs of individuals experiencing homelessness. Outreach and drop-in programming support clients by developing individualized plans to help them work on their own unique barriers. Services include:

- Referrals to government programs, healthcare and mental health services;
- Supportive programming including life and employment training skills;
- Community meals and food outreach;
- Access to hot showers and laundry;
- Social and community connection;
- Provision of affordable housing units; and
- Assistance in finding appropriate affordable housing units.

In addition to these important services, the non-profit sector continues to advocate on behalf of residents in need of additional resources.

HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY UPDATES IN 2022

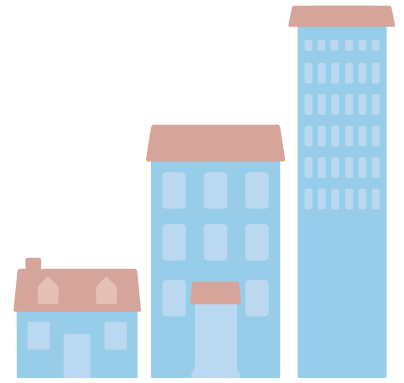
Strategic Direction 1:

Prevent pathways into homelessness

The City and community partners are committed to taking a proactive approach to homelessness prevention. Prevention practices include reducing structural barriers (such as low income and lack of affordable housing options), providing intervention measures for households that are at risk of experiencing homelessness (such as rent supplements), and providing supportive housing and services for people who have experienced homelessness to help to stabilize their experience and break the cycle of homelessness. This strategic direction aligns with the City of Richmond Affordable Housing Strategy (2017–2027) and the City of Richmond Market Rental Policy, and aims to continue to create affordable rental options across the housing continuum. Prevention also involves coordinated local outreach and intake processes to help reduce barriers to navigating and accessing critical supports and services before a crisis deepens.

Actions and Achievements

- In September 2022, the City, in partnership with BC Housing and Community Builders, opened Aster Place (Bridgeport) Supportive Housing, providing 40 new supportive housing units to Richmond residents. Aster Place was constructed on City-owned land valued at \$6.58 million and received a financial contribution of up to \$250,000 from the City's Affordable Housing Reserve towards associated development cost charges, permit fees and servicing costs. This funding complemented the capital and operating contributions provided by BC Housing. Aster Place provides stable housing for community members previously experiencing homelessness, including those who were staying at the Emergency Response Centre (ERC) during the pandemic. The ERC, which opened in 2020 in partnership with BC Housing and Turning Point Recovery Society at Minoru Place Activity Centre, provided 45 emergency shelter spaces for individuals experiencing homelessness to physically distance and access medical supports and other services during the pandemic. Aster Place was opened in coordination with the ERC closure to prevent individuals staying at the ERC from re-entering homelessness. Aster Place operators, Community Builders Group, provide 24/7 support services including daily meals, life skills training, and mental health and addiction recovery services.
- In June 2022, City Council approved an amendment to the Official Community Plan (OCP) Market Rental Housing Policy in response to increased need for all forms of rental housing, including market rental.



The policy now states that city-wide rezoning applications that include more than 60 housing units must have 15% of the residential floor area secured as market rental units. This is in addition to the existing requirement that a minimum of 15% of the residential floor area in developments with more than 60 units located within the City Centre be contributed as Low-End Market Rental (LEMR) units, and 10% if outside of the City Centre.

- The City continued to work with BC Housing and Pathways Clubhouse to plan for the development of a six-storey, 80-unit affordable housing building on City-owned land at 5491 No. 2 Road. The development's low rental rates will help provide housing stability for low-income residents who cannot afford market rental housing, including those who are experiencing or are at risk of becoming homeless. The City has committed \$2.2 million in funding from the City's Affordable Housing Reserve to offset development cost charges, permit fees and servicing costs associated with this project as well as contributing City-owned land valued at \$8.47 million. This funding will complement the capital and operating contributions provided by BC Housing. Construction of this project is anticipated to begin in 2023.
- Throughout 2022, the City continued to work with community partners such as Chimo Community Services, who operate the Homelessness Prevention Program. This program helps to connect Richmond residents at risk of experiencing homelessness to community-based services, including rent supplements to help them access market (non-subsidized) rental housing. Participants receive short-term rent supplements while engaging in planning and working on personal goals with the aid of a case manager.
- In 2022, the City initiated work to explore enhanced solutions for discharge and transition planning practices for individuals experiencing homelessness leaving Richmond-based healthcare organizations. This project, which aims to ensure individuals experiencing homelessness have access to uninterrupted and seamless healthcare and supports following discharge from a healthcare setting, is anticipated to be completed in 2023.



Strategic Direction 2:

Support residents who are experiencing homelessness

As each person's experience of homelessness is unique, communities require a variety of different services and supports to meet the diverse needs of residents experiencing homelessness. Richmond continues to strengthen its network of homelessness service providers that offer coordinated, compassionate, non-judgemental access to necessary programs and services to increase stability, health and safety for residents experiencing homelessness. Under this strategic direction, the City's role is to facilitate partnerships and collaboration among service providers and continue to advocate to senior levels of government for sustainable resources to support the complex needs of this population.





Actions and Achievements

- Throughout 2022, the City implemented a range of programs and services to support Richmond residents experiencing homelessness using \$3.35 million in provincial funding received through the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) Strengthening Communities' Services grant program (see pages 9 and 10). 2022 project highlights related to service provision included:
 - Warming Centres: Warming Centres provide a place for individuals experiencing homelessness to stay warm and dry on nights of extreme cold throughout the winter months. Visitors receive snacks and warm beverages, and access referrals to support services. For the 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 winter seasons, The Salvation Army operated a Warming Centre at the South Arm Outdoor Pool building. For the 2022/2023 season, a second Warming Centre opened at Brighthouse Pavilion and was operated by Turning Point Recovery Society.
 - Drop-in Centre and Shower Program: Turning Point Recovery Society continued to operate a Drop-in Centre and Shower Program at Brighthouse Pavilion. This program, which opened at Brighthouse Pavilion in 2021, operates Monday to Friday during the day and provides daily meals, access to computers and the Internet, service navigation and referrals, as well as shower and laundry services to Richmond residents experiencing homelessness.
 - Food Outreach: The Salvation Army continued to operate a Food Outreach program on Monday through Thursday evenings, delivering nutritious meals to individuals experiencing homelessness. Through this program, which began in early 2022, Food Outreach staff picked up meals prepared by local churches and delivered them to individuals experiencing homelessness who were unable to access community meal programs.
- The City continued to work with BC Housing and The Salvation Army to support the operation of the Richmond House Emergency Shelter. In 2022, Richmond House provided 45 emergency shelter beds, three meals a day, showers, laundry facilities, and assistance in locating housing, services, and recreational opportunities for individuals experiencing homelessness in Richmond.
- Throughout 2022, the City continued to work closely with the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction (MSDPR), Turning Point Recovery Society, Chimo Community Services, and The Salvation Army through their homelessness outreach programs to help connect individuals experiencing homelessness with critical supports and services in the community.

Strategic Direction 3:

Provide pathways out of homelessness

Individuals are best able to transition out of homelessness when various types of housing and support services are available. The Housing First approach prioritizes moving people from homelessness into housing and providing individualized supports and services as needed. This approach provides stability, which allows individuals to easily access resources and attend to their physical and mental health, education or employment goals. The City's role is to support service provider organizations to coordinate service delivery and to advocate to the provincial and federal governments for increased funding for affordable housing in Richmond.

Actions and Achievements

- With the opening of Aster Place Supportive Housing in September 2022 (see page 4), 40 new supportive housing units were opened and tenanted by Richmond residents experiencing homelessness. Community Builders Group, who operates Aster Place, ensured tenant transitions into the new supportive housing building went smoothly. At Aster Place, residents receive the individualized supports they need to create stability in their lives.
- RainCity Housing, who operates Alderbridge Supportive Housing, continued to support tenants living in the building. This 40-unit supportive housing building provides 24/7 support services including daily meals, life skills training, and mental health and addiction recovery services. Tenants work towards individualized goals with the support of RainCity Housing staff, with the aim to achieve greater housing independence.
- The City continued to collaborate with Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction (MSDPR) and Richmond RCMP Vulnerable Persons Unit to provide street outreach services to those experiencing homelessness on City-owned land, including public parks and public parking lots. The services include assistance with locating shelter, support with completing applications for financial assistance and referrals to other services and supports.
- Lu'ma Native Housing Society, the community entity responsible for implementing a coordinated access and referral system in the Greater Vancouver region through the federal Reaching Home program, provided an update to the Richmond Community Homelessness Table in 2022 (see page 9). A coordinated access system, which provides standardized procedures for client intake and assessment of need along with a community-wide housing support service database, is anticipated to be implemented across the region in 2023.

Strategic Direction 4:

Foster collaboration and community-building among community partners

Homelessness is a complex and multifaceted issue that cannot be resolved by one level of government or organization alone. Collaboration among government agencies, homelessness service providers and individuals with lived experience is essential to meeting the needs of residents experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Working together to coordinate services, share information and align resources is the most efficient and cost-effective means of meeting community need and enhancing community-based service delivery capacity. The City's role related to this strategic direction includes leadership for a Community Homelessness Table that connects key homelessness service providers to support collaboration and alignment on an ongoing basis.

Actions and Achievements

- In 2022, through the City Grant Program's Health, Social and Safety Grant stream, the City provided support towards community-based homelessness service provision. Funding was used to help support a Drop-in Centre operated by Turning Point Recovery Society, a Crisis Line operation, outreach and advocacy programs operated by Chimo Community Services, a Food Outreach Program operated by The Salvation Army and meal programs for individuals experiencing homelessness and isolation operated by the Parish of St. Alban's.
- The Community Homelessness Table, comprised of government agencies and community-based homelessness service providers, met regularly throughout 2022. The Table's aim is to enhance collaboration, address community needs, share information and align resources. Discussions focused on challenges or barriers the organizations or their clients are facing, emerging trends, and current and upcoming initiatives to support individuals experiencing homelessness in the community.
- Through coordinating the implementation of a range of programs and services funded through the UBCM Strengthening Communities' Services Program (see pages 7 and 10), the City worked closely with various service providers to align resources and support program sustainability. Collaboration with partners in the community included Turning Point Recovery Society, The Salvation Army, Homelessness Services Association of BC, Vancouver Coastal Health and individuals with lived experience of homelessness.
- The City continued to monitor funding opportunities available from federal and provincial grant programs to support residents experiencing or at risk of homelessness and share information with community-based service providers. The City supported organizations in applying for grants and assisted with program and resource alignment.



Strategic Direction 5:

Communicate, research and monitor homelessness

Richmond is committed to creating an inclusive community for all residents. Because homelessness is not always visible, many residents may not be aware of the needs and circumstances of fellow community members who are experiencing homelessness. Where there is a lack of understanding, there can be misconceptions and stigma, which can act as barriers for individuals experiencing homelessness in accessing critically needed services and housing options. The City's primary role in this strategic direction is to promote opportunities to increase awareness and understanding relating to homelessness. Enhancing public awareness helps to foster a more welcoming, inclusive and safe community for all residents. Ensuring that the City and local service providers are up to date with information related to Richmond's residents experiencing homelessness helps to equip partners with the necessary information to align resources and effectively advocate to senior levels of government to meet Richmond-specific needs.

Actions and Achievements

- Throughout 2022, the City implemented two targeted awareness and education programs using provincial grant funding received through a UBCM Strengthening Communities' Services Program (also described on pages 7 and 9):
 - Community Conversations: In June 2022, the City hosted a community dialogue series titled *Home: A Community Conversation on Homelessness*. These sessions provided the opportunity for community members from diverse backgrounds to come together to discuss the complexities and common misunderstandings associated with the circumstances and experiences of homelessness. A total of 73 people attended the three sessions. In response to community interest, additional sessions were scheduled in 2023.
 - City Staff Training: Working with Homelessness Services Association of British Columbia (HSABC), the City developed and hosted two levels of homelessness training for City employees who work directly with the public. Level 1 launched in Fall 2022 and was completed by 184 employees by the end of the year. Level 2, which builds on the information and concepts from Level 1, was launched in early 2023.
- The City provided additional training opportunities in 2022 to help support enhanced customer service to community members who may be experiencing mental health challenges (whether they are experiencing homelessness or not), including mental health first aid, conflict management, change management and accessible customer service.
- The City continued to liaise with local service providers to monitor ongoing trends related to homelessness, particularly to understand the changing needs of individuals experiencing homelessness. Information regarding increasing rates of homelessness, the characteristics and identified needs of individuals experiencing homelessness in Richmond informed the City's advocacy with senior levels of government throughout 2022.

CONCLUSION

The Homelessness Strategy is guided by the vision that:

*By 2029, homelessness in Richmond is rare, brief and non-recurring.
Richmond is an inclusive community that works in collaboration to
provide a continuum of housing and support services.*

In 2022, the collaborative actions described in this report contributed towards achieving the Homelessness Strategy's vision. During this past year, the City, other government agencies, local service providers and individual members of the community worked together to achieve notable progress towards addressing the strategic directions and actions identified in the Homelessness Strategy.

Notable actions included the ongoing implementation of projects coordinated through a \$3.35 million UBCM Strengthening Communities' Services grant, including the provision of an enhanced Drop-in Centre and Shower Program, expanded Warming Centre spaces on nights of extreme cold during the winter seasons, and support for food outreach programming. The City also continued to focus on homelessness prevention policies and pathways out of homelessness by exploring opportunities for additional supportive housing units, including the opening of 40 new units at Aster Place Supportive Housing in Fall 2022.

While significant progress was made towards achieving a number of actions outlined in the Strategy, homelessness remains a critical and growing issue in the community. The City of Richmond is committed to continuing its role as a leader to make homelessness in Richmond rare, brief and non-recurring. Richmond-based service providers are well connected, understand the unique needs of members of the community and continue to build capacity to meet evolving needs. While housing and homelessness is primarily a provincial mandate, the City continues to work within the tools available to municipal governments to reduce and prevent homelessness in Richmond and will continue to advocate to senior levels of government for affordable housing and supports for vulnerable members of the community.





City of Richmond

6911 No. 3 Road, Richmond, BC V6Y 2C1

Telephone: 604-276-4000

richmond.ca