

Vancouver Homelessness Plan

Mitigating the Impacts of Unsheltered Homelessness

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Vancouver City Council Workshop

Jamie Spinelli,

Homeless Response Coordinator

Why We're Here...

Community Comments:

- “... concerned for the safety and health of the residents in the camp ...”
- “... our town is failing miserably with transients and campsites over running our green spaces ...”
- “If sleeping is legal on public property, why does the city not designate which property this can occur on?”
- “If we do nothing, we do not have to wonder what our city will look and feel ...”
- “... we should be taking care of what we have first, before spending on anything else.”

Why We're Here...

Community Comments:

- “... can not enjoy nor express a trusted future for our children looking at trash, needles, campsites etc.”
- “Vancouver is becoming a dumpsite for trash, tagging and unsightly camps, drug abuse ...”
- “What can I do to help?”
- “Where else can I go?”



Workshop Outcomes

- Solicit feedback from City Council to ensure plan is in alignment with expectations
- Discuss next steps and future City Council action needed for implementation

Presentation Overview

- Current impacts
- City's role/Joint Executive Group on Homelessness
- Systemic contributions and current mitigation efforts
- Legal landscape
- Plan for mitigation
- Outcomes
- Future City Council action and next steps
- Feedback and questions

Impacts of Unsheltered Homelessness

- Increase in visible homelessness
 - Tents, encampments, RVs and other vehicles
- Increased solid waste, biohazardous material and belongings on both public and private property
 - Since February, the City has cleaned up over 110 tons of solid waste
 - Illegal dumping at encampments
- Negative impacts on mental and physical health of those living unsheltered, including an average of 25 deaths per year
- People showing symptoms of mental/behavioral health conditions

Contributors to Impacts

- Shortage of shelter space
- Chronic health conditions
- Unmet needs (basic and otherwise)
- Untreated mental/behavioral health
- Lack of deeply affordable supportive housing
- Housing/Homeless Response System at capacity/overwhelmed
- Barriers to accessing services/shortage in resources



Joint Executive Group on Homelessness

- Policy forum to identify possible gaps and opportunities for further coordination and investment
 - Establishes Clark County as the lead agency on regional homeless response, while City plays supportive role
 - Collaborate on projects and initiatives that address homelessness and its impacts
- Meeting since November
- Some of the proposed mitigation efforts have been discussed as ideas

What We Have Done (Systemwide)

- Increased shelter capacity through the Affordable Housing Fund (AHF)
- Built housing units through the AHF for people experiencing homelessness
- Provided rental assistance through CARES Act
- Formed Adult Mobile Crisis Intervention and Co-Responder teams
- Contributed to the purchase of Bertha Cain Baugh Place 
- Facilitated increased response from faith-based community



Current Mitigation Efforts

- Mail service
- Sanitation sites
- Talkin' Trash
- HART
- Large-scale camp clean-ups
- Safe Parking Zone



Legal Landscape

- Bell v. Boise
 - 2015: Dept. of Justice Statement of Interest
 - Jones v. City of Los Angeles
- City of Vancouver Ordinance Update
 - Unlawful 6:30am-9:30pm
- Martin v. Boise
 - 2018: 9th Circuit Ruling
 - 2019: U.S. Supreme Court

Legal Landscape

- COVID-19 Considerations
 - Washington State: Stay Home, Stay Healthy
 - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
 - Balance of Risks
 - If individual housing options are unavailable, allow people who are living unsheltered to remain where they are.
- L.A. Alliance for Human Rights v. City of Los Angeles

Recommended Mitigation Strategies



Mail Service

- Contract with Outsiders Inn to provide mail service five days per week at two locations



Expand Talkin' Trash Program

- Additional crew
- Add outreach/engagement component



HART Street Treatment Team (not a crisis response team)

- Mental/behavioral health provider, minor medical, peer, prescriber
- Contract with CRMH

Recommended Mitigation Strategies



Additional Safe Parking Zones

- City-owned lots
- Partner with churches and/or other entities



Supported Campsites

- Contract with nonprofit to manage
- Approximately 20 camps per site
- Spread out throughout city

Future Recommended Mitigation Strategies



Bridge Shelter (*partnership opportunity*)

- Contract with nonprofit provider
- 150 beds
- Potentially 2-4 years out
- Congregate shelter landscape uncertain due to COVID-19



Community Court

- Unhoused diversion program
- Encourages participation in supportive/stabilizing services

Supported Campsites: Overview

- Approximately 20 individual camps per site, depending on location, for 20-40 people
- Fenced for privacy and safety needs of residents
- Supported by nonprofit management, sanitation/hygiene services, Talkin' Trash, HART, outreach and other service providers
- Trailer on site for meeting and appointment space and storage
- Nonprofit to employ camp resident to assist with daily operations and management
- Total number of camps needed is a moving target

Supported Campsites: Location Selection

- Use City-owned properties and partner with churches and/or other willing private property owners
- As close to where camps already exist as possible
- Within a half-mile from transit access
- No more than one per neighborhood or within certain distance from each other
- Prohibit camping within certain radius of a supported campsite and sensitive areas
- Preference will always be for spaces that will provide the least amount of negative impact on environment, residential areas and businesses
- Commitment to community outreach, input and solution-focused participation in selection process

Outcomes: Cleaner, Safer, Healthier for All

- Cleaner, safer, healthier and more resilient city for everyone
- Better management of current state of unsheltered homelessness
- Decrease garbage, litter, belongings in public right-of-way and common spaces
- Increased livability for community members and businesses
- Unsheltered individuals living in more sanitary and supportive conditions
- Increased meaningful engagement/outreach

Outcomes: Cleaner, Safer, Healthier for All

- Increased low-barrier employment opportunities for unhoused
- More equitable access to healthcare
- Reduced crises experienced by those living unsheltered
- Reduced use of police, emergency services, ER as primary care and associated costs
- Supportive and stabilizing services better equip individuals for housing/employment retention

Mitigation Plan Alignment with Joint Executive Group

Guiding Principle	Alignment
Engage and involve community	Creates employment/volunteer opportunities
Strengthen system capacity and increase leveraging opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Creates many “doors” for access• Provides opportunities for funding partnerships
Facilitate interactions with organizations not covered by the Homeless Action Plan.	Includes partnerships with mental, behavioral and physical healthcare providers
Recognize lived experience and closest point of contact to those communities as the experts.	Plan created with input from those with current and past lived experience, as well as boots on the ground providers

Mitigation Plan Summary

Impact	Strategy	Details	Est. Start
Garbage , trash, clutter in public	Talkin' Trash crew expansion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional truck • Hire two crew members • Funding partnership(s) 	July 2021
People living in tents/vehicles in the ROW	Supported campsites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possibly pilot first • Additional outreach for pilot & determining other site locations • Ordinance/Council action 	Sept 2021
	Additional Safe Park areas	Community & partner outreach for site location	Dec 2021
	Bridge shelter	TBD	TBD
Barriers to accessing services	Mail service	Add mail service to AHF contract with Outsiders Inn	May 2021
	HART Street Treatment Team	Contract with CRMHS	Sept 2021
	Talkin' Trash scope expansion	Training	July 2021
	Community Court	TBD	TBD

Next Steps/Timeline

By September 2021

- Create mechanisms for community feedback (BeHeard, NA meetings, etc)
- Expansion of Talkin' Trash or other clean up program
- Columbia River Mental Health ready to launch Street Treatment Team
- Pilot campsite(s) open
 - Pending updates to camping ordinance
 - Identification of service provider/camp host

Next Steps/Timeline

By December 2021

- At least 3 campsites operating
- Street Treatment Team operating in Vancouver 5 days/week
- Second Safe Park site identified and operating

Future Action Needed by City Council

Changes to Unlawful Camping Ordinance

- Ordinance changes to allow supported campsites
 - Expansion of 14 Day Permit Authority
 - Site selection following review of zoning, rights-of-way, community resources, and potential impacts
- Prohibit camping around/near supported campsites
- Prohibit camping within sensitive environmental areas

Questions For Council

- What resonates?
- What concerns do you have?
- Is this in alignment with your expectations?
- Any guidance for further alignment?

Questions and Discussion

Jamie Spinelli, Homeless Response Coordinator

Jamie.Spinelli@cityofvancouver.us

360-487-8610

