



CITY OF RICHMOND  
**HOMELESSNESS  
STRATEGY**  
2019–2029  
**2023 UPDATE**





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ADOPTED SEPTEMBER 2019

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STRATEGY**  
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# INTRODUCTION

The City of Richmond and its partners are committed to preventing and reducing poverty and homelessness in Richmond, increasing affordable housing options, and fostering the mental health and well-being of its residents, especially those who are vulnerable or experiencing challenges in their lives. This approach aligns with City Council’s Strategic Plan 2022–2026 and is related to the creation of a vibrant, active and resilient community that supports the diverse needs of residents and vulnerable populations, and community safety. Affordable housing is a critical factor in circumstances surrounding homelessness, therefore addressing homelessness directly aligns with both the Homelessness Strategy and the City’s Affordable Housing Strategy. In addition, the City’s 2021–2031 Collaborative Action Plan to Reduce and Prevent Poverty in Richmond further complements these strategies and together, they advance the City’s actions aimed at reducing and preventing poverty and homelessness while also increasing affordable housing options along the housing continuum in Richmond.

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 driven 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. At the end of 2023, the City of Richmond reached the halfway point in implementing the Homelessness Strategy. Over the next five years the City is committed to continuing its leadership role to make homelessness in Richmond rare, brief and non-recurring. While 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.

The number of individuals experiencing homelessness in Metro Vancouver is increasing, including in Richmond, according to Homeless Counts that have taken place across the region every three years since 2002. The 2023 Homeless Count, conducted March 7 and 8, 2023, identified 4,821 people experiencing homelessness across Greater Vancouver. This was an increase from 3,634 in 2020 and represented an increase of 32% since 2020. Homelessness in Richmond also increased between 2020 and 2023, consistent with Greater Vancouver trends. There were a total of 162 people who identified as experiencing homelessness in Richmond in the 2023 count, compared to 85 individuals in 2020.

In addition to the increase in the number of individuals experiencing homelessness, the circumstances facing this vulnerable population have also become more complex. Challenges with mental health conditions, substance use, and physical disabilities within this demographic have resulted in increased demand for services and supports in the community.

Throughout 2023, 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.

# GOVERNMENTS AND SERVICE PROVIDER ROLES



## 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 the community's diverse population, including residents experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Recognizing that senior levels of government have the primary responsibility for providing funding for homelessness prevention programs, services for individuals experiencing homelessness 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-judgmental 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 and to elicit support for other services to assist individuals experiencing homelessness.
- **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.

Through the City's relationship-based approach, the City works with community partners, including Community Associations and Societies, to ensure that City facilities, including libraries and community centres, continue to provide safe spaces where residents experiencing homelessness are able to connect socially with others and receive information about supports and services in Richmond.

## The Province of BC

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 individuals and families experiencing homelessness and new coordinated, multidisciplinary actions to reduce encampments.

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 Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction's (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. MSDPR, in partnership with the City and other organizations, offer these supports through direct outreach in the community to individuals who are experiencing unsheltered homelessness in Richmond's public spaces including parks, wooded areas and under bridges.

Through the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) Strengthening Communities' Services Grant Program, the province provided funding to support local governments and First Nations to respond to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness in their communities, while keeping both individuals and communities safe and healthy. By March 31, 2024, a total of \$3.35 million of funding through this grant program will have been invested in Richmond community-led projects and the funding will end. This funding has supported services such as outreach and mental health supports, a drop-in program for people experiencing unsheltered homelessness where they can access referrals for needed services and receive meals, access to showers and laundry, and overnight shelter spaces during the winter.

## 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, the designated community entity responsible for administering the program across the region. 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, has developed and is implementing a coordinated access and referral system through the Reaching Home program. The Coordinated Access Homelessness Management Information System (CA-HMIS), which provides standardized procedures for client intake and assessment of need along with a community-wide housing support service database, was launched December 2023 and will be implemented across the region, including Richmond, in 2024. This program will be used by all community organizations who receive funding through the Reaching Home Program or BC Housing. Municipal governments, including Richmond, will also have the ability to use the system in the future for referral and case management by outreach staff.

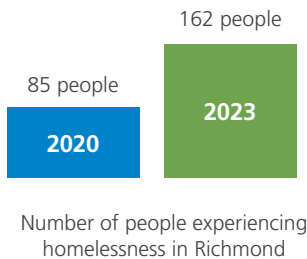
## Non-Profit, Social Service and Faith-Based Organizations

Non-profit, social service and faith-based organizations, their staff and community volunteers 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, achieve housing stability, and ultimately participate fully 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 supports clients by working with them to develop individualized plans to help them advance their own goals and priorities while addressing any unique barriers to accessing appropriate types of housing. Among the tangible services provided are:

- Referrals to government programs, healthcare and mental health services;
- Supportive programming including life and employment skills training;
- Community meals and food outreach;
- Access to washroom facilities, 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 a wide range of additional resources.

# HOMELESSNESS IN RICHMOND IN 2023



The number of residents experiencing or at-risk of sheltered and unsheltered homelessness in Richmond has significantly increased in recent years. Information collected during the 2023 Homeless Count on March 7 and 8, 2023 aligns with qualitative information provided by service providers in Richmond. There were 162 people experiencing homelessness in Richmond identified in the 2023 count, compared to 85 individuals in 2020. These counts provide statistics, trends and other information about the general characteristics of individuals in the community who are experiencing homelessness to help provide a better understanding of the variable and unique characteristics 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 about individuals who agreed to be surveyed within a particular 24-hour period. Individuals who access services and shelters are more likely to be included than those who do not. This methodology also does not reflect people who are vicariously housed such as those without housing who are staying with friends, family, and/or strangers often referred to as ‘couch-surfing’.



Of the 162 individuals identified during Richmond’s 2023 Homeless Count, half were sheltered and half were unsheltered

Of the 162 individuals identified during the 2023 Homeless Count, half were sheltered and half were unsheltered. Some of the individuals who had shelter on the night of the count had accessed Richmond’s Warming Centres. At the time, these Warming Centres provided temporary, emergency spaces and were only operational on nights of extreme winter weather. Had the weather been more favourable, additional individuals would have likely been unsheltered at the time of the count.

Of the people identified during the 2023 Homeless Count, one-third of the people experiencing homelessness in Richmond were seniors 55 years of age and over. This was higher than the percentage for the region, where 22% of those counted were 55 years of age and over. In addition to the high number of seniors, Indigenous individuals continue to be overrepresented. In Richmond, 15% or 17 respondents identified as Indigenous, compared with less than 1% of the Richmond population recorded in the 2021 Census. The overrepresentation of Indigenous individuals in the recent Homeless Count is present across the region with 33% of individuals identifying as Indigenous compared to 2% of the population.

Furthermore, two-thirds of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness were long-term Richmond residents who had lived in the community for at least ten years. Almost half of all respondents, including those who were sheltered and those who were unsheltered, had lived in the community for at least ten years. This trend was different when isolating responses for those who completed the 2023 survey at Richmond House Emergency Shelter. Of this group of respondents, 52% had been in Richmond for less than 30 days and an additional 15% for less than a year.

The causes of homelessness are complex and there are many factors that may lead someone to experience homelessness. Individuals interviewed as part of the recent Count lost their housing for multifaceted reasons, with the highest responses being not enough income for housing (54%), landlord/tenant conflict (22%), addiction or substance use issue (17%), building sold or renovated (13%), physical health issues (13%), mental health issues (11%) and unfit or unsafe housing (11%). The top three responses at the regional level differed slightly from Richmond. The regional responses were: not enough income for housing (35%), substance use (24%) and mental health issues (16%).

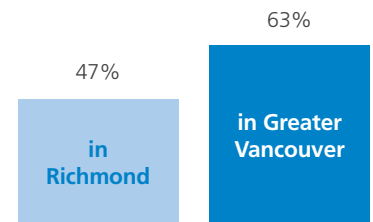
In addition to the increased numbers of people needing support, contributing social issues, such as mental health concerns, drug addiction or substance use and the toxic drug supply, have also increased the complexity of the challenges to be addressed in the community. Respondents reported multiple health concerns including mental health conditions, substance use, and physical disabilities. In total, 84% of respondents reported at least one health concern and 29% of respondents reported three or more health concerns. Of those who reported a health concern, the highest responses were: mental health issue (50%), addictions issue (47%), and medical condition or illness (43%). Although these numbers seem high, self-reported issues with addictions were lower in Richmond than in the region. In total, 47% of Richmond respondents reported an addictions issue compared to 63% in Greater Vancouver. Addictions issues may include substance addictions such as tobacco, alcohol, cannabis, stimulants and opiates, as well as behavioural addictions including gambling.

The combined challenges of increased numbers of individuals experiencing homelessness and increased complexity of circumstances have a direct interconnection to the housing continuum and the need for appropriate types of both supportive and affordable housing. The need for supportive housing to move individuals out of shelters or off the street has outpaced access to available units despite significant efforts by the City and BC Housing to increase these. Additional affordable housing units are needed in the community to transition individuals who are ready for more independent housing out of supportive housing thus freeing up units for those in need. An overall lack of affordable housing prevents movement along the housing continuum and creates a significant barrier for individuals seeking to transition out of homelessness.

The increasing complexity of factors contributing to poverty and homelessness combined with the multifaceted needs of individuals experiencing homelessness and the lack of appropriate affordable housing options have affected the ability of the City and its partners to adequately address the needs of some of Richmond’s most vulnerable. The City has taken significant action in 2023 to respond to the needs of individuals experiencing homelessness and the impacts on the community and public spaces.



Number of people experiencing homelessness who reported an addictions issue:



## City Service Enhancements

Throughout 2023, the City has continued to explore opportunities and initiatives to address homelessness in Richmond and to identify and secure the resources and supports needed to implement them. Over the past several years an integrated and proactive corporate strategy has evolved to respond to the prevention and management of homelessness in the community. A further coordinated process of resource allocation, implementation, research and evaluation involving the City, related government agencies and community service providers has been identified as the optimal approach to mitigate homelessness in Richmond and significant work has been done to date in this area. Recent enhancements to service levels and staffing expansion are also steps to further enhance this approach.

In late 2023, City Council approved additional resources to increase the City's capacity and complement actions the City and its partners have taken to respond to homelessness while also expanding services and supports to address the needs of individuals in the community who may be unsheltered. These supports include expanded daily hours of operation during the 2023/2024 winter season at the Brighthouse Pavilion Drop-in Centre to ensure supports and warm spaces were available 12 hours a day, seven days a week. To further extend the opportunity for individuals to be out of the cold, wet or snow overnight, the City expanded the operations of both the Brighthouse Pavilion Warming Centre and the South Arm Outdoor Pool Warming Centre. These programs operated 12 hours per night, every night during the 2023/2024 winter season instead of only operating on nights of extreme winter weather. Commencing in December 2023, these changes provided access to support over a full 24-hour period at the Brighthouse location and daily overnight support at the South Arm location until April 15, 2024. These expanded winter supports have a direct and critical benefit to individuals who are unsheltered in the community by providing access to warm spaces, shower, washroom and laundry facilities, healthy meals and access to referrals to government services and community supports.

Funding was also approved in late 2023 for two new Homelessness Outreach Workers who will be hired by the City in early 2024 to ensure proactive and timely outreach to people experiencing unsheltered homelessness. These positions will engage in field outreach in order to build relationships, provide referrals and connect people to services in the community. This is also expected to mitigate risk and reduce the need for more complex intervention from law enforcement or first responders, and reduce service delivery impacts on other City departments. In addition, funding for four new Bylaw Officers was approved. These staff will identify, monitor and enforce bylaw violations that may intersect with homelessness under the Parks and Unightly Bylaw and Traffic and Parking Bylaws. Regular proactive patrols of public property with a focus on parks and publicly accessible crown land will be implemented, along with proactive patrols of streets and periodic bike patrols of parks.

Combined, the current approach and recently approved resources have enhanced the prior interventions in the realm of homelessness. Once these supports are fully implemented, they will result in increased capacity to respond to the increase in homelessness in Richmond. By working together, the City and its partners will continue to implement a range of significant initiatives to provide support to individuals experiencing deep poverty and complex situations that have resulted in homelessness. These initiatives are of critical importance in the community and supported by recent data. In 2023, the City has demonstrated leadership and commitment to support new and innovative approaches to responding to homelessness in Richmond.



# HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY HIGHLIGHTS IN 2023

## 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 at risk of experiencing homelessness (such as rent supplements), and providing supportive housing and services for people who have experienced homelessness to help stabilize their experience and break the cycle of homelessness. This strategic direction aligns with the City of Richmond Affordable Housing Strategy 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. From a municipal standpoint, the role of the City is to ensure the right mix of affordable housing options are available to meet the housing needs of vulnerable residents and to facilitate collaboration among community partners to develop prevention services.

## Actions and Achievements

- In 2023, the City continued work with BC Housing and Pathways Clubhouse 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 experiencing homelessness. Construction will begin in 2024.
- In July 2023, the City supported Richmond Cares, Richmond Gives' application for provincial funding, allocated through the Seniors Services Society of B.C., to offer the Seniors Housing Information and Navigation Ease (SHINE) program in Richmond through March 2024. This new program facilitates timely access and housing navigation and support for vulnerable seniors who are at risk of homelessness, including those with mental health and addiction challenges. This program provides an additional, critical resource to support seniors to explore affordable housing options.

- In October 2023, City Council approved the extension of Alderbridge Supportive Housing’s ground lease for a period of approximately three and a half years until December 31, 2027. This extension will allow additional time for the development of a permanent supportive housing building on City-owned land and help prevent the 40 current tenants from potentially returning to homelessness.
- In November 2023, City Council approved the rezoning of City-owned lands at 4831 Steveston Highway. The purpose of the rezoning was to allow for the construction of an affordable housing building. The project will be largely financed using funding made available through the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation’s (CMHC) Rapid Housing Initiative. BC Housing also partnered with the City and CMHC by providing additional capital and operating funding. Ultimately, the development will provide 25 units of affordable housing for women and women with children experiencing or at-risk of homelessness and is being advanced on an accelerated timeline with construction completion anticipated in late 2024.



## 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-judgmental 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

- The number of residents experiencing or at-risk of sheltered and unsheltered homelessness in Richmond has significantly increased as demonstrated in the findings of the 2023 Homeless Count. The Count was carried out on March 7 and 8, 2023 and found that there were a minimum of 162 people experiencing homelessness in Richmond compared with a minimum of 85 individuals in 2020. Of these 162 individuals, half were sheltered and half were unsheltered. This increase in the number of people experiencing homelessness in Richmond has resulted in a corporate strategic focus on this area and expanded services and additional supports being planned and implemented.
- In response to the increased number of individuals experiencing homelessness and increasingly complex challenges related to homelessness in Richmond, significant resources were approved in 2023 for inclusion in the City's 2024 Operating Budget. The Council-approved resources will increase the City's capacity and complement actions the City and its partners currently take to respond to homelessness. These include two new Homelessness Outreach Workers, four new Bylaw Officers and funding for the continuation of the Brighthouse Pavilion Drop-in Centre and Shower Program.
- The City continued to implement 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. 2023 project highlights related to service provision included two Warming Centres, the Brighthouse Pavilion Drop-In Centre and Shower Program, Food Outreach and Staff Training. Details of each of these programs are outlined below.
- In 2023, three City facilities, South Arm Community Centre, City Centre Community Centre and Minoru Centre for Active Living, remained open on Christmas day to ensure safe, warm spaces are available for residents 365 days a year.





- In the winter of 2022/2023, two Warming Centres, activated on nights of extreme winter weather, provided a place for individuals experiencing homelessness to stay warm and dry. Visitors received snacks and warm beverages as well as support with referrals to relevant services. The Salvation Army operated the 15-space Warming Centre in the South Arm Outdoor Pool building and Turning Point Recovery Society operated the second 15-space Warming Centre out of the Brighthouse Pavilion in City Centre. This provided an additional 30 spaces. These were both well-utilized as outlined in Table 1.

**Table 1: Warming Centre Usage Winter 2022/2023**

Location	Dates	Average Individuals Per Night	Total Visits
Brighthouse Pavilion	Mid-December 2022 to March 31, 2023	13	433
South Arm Outdoor Pool	November 1, 2022 to March 31, 2023	12	504
<b>Total Visits</b>			<b>937</b>

- For the 2023/2024 winter season, two Warming Centres, operated by Turning Point Recovery Society, operated at Brighthouse Pavilion and South Arm Outdoor Pool building. At the start of the season, each centre provided 15 spaces on nights of extreme winter weather and were funded through the UBCM Strengthening Communities’ Services Grant. In December 2023, the City provided additional funding to expand services in both locations to operate every night until April 15, 2024. In addition, the capacity increased to 21 spaces at the South Arm Outdoor Pool building because the need for physical distancing has lessened since the pandemic. Usage in both locations has continued to increase between October and December 2023 and is expected to exceed the usage for the prior year (Table 2).

**Table 2: Warming Centre Usage October to December 2023**

Location	Dates	Average Individuals Per Night	Total Visits
Brighthouse Pavilion	October 15 to December 31, 2023	15	468
South Arm Outdoor Pool	November 28 to December 31, 2023	9*	151
<b>Total Visits</b>			<b>619</b>

\*This has steadily increased. The average for January 2024 was 17.57.

- The City continued to work with BC Housing and The Salvation Army to support the operation of the Richmond House Emergency Shelter. In 2023, BC Housing approved permanent funding for the additional 15 beds added to the Shelter during the COVID-19 pandemic to total 45 permanent beds at the shelter. In addition, in response to the 2023/2024 winter season, BC Housing approved funding for 10 additional spaces under the Extreme Winter Response Shelter Program at Richmond House. These 10 spaces were activated only on nights of extreme winter weather. With these additional spaces, Richmond House Shelter provided a total of 45 regular beds, 10 weather-activated spaces, three meals a day, showers, laundry facilities, and assistance in locating housing, services and recreational opportunities for individuals experiencing homelessness in Richmond.

## Shelter and Warming Centre Options in Richmond, Winter 2023/2024

### Richmond House Emergency Shelter and Extreme Weather Response Spaces

- ✓ Increased capacity from 30 to 45 permanent beds.
- ✓ Access to 10 mats providing new overnight, warm space on nights of extreme weather until April 15, 2024.

### South Arm Outdoor Pool Warming Centre

- ✓ Expanded access to up to 21 mats on a nightly basis until April 15, 2024.

### Brighthouse Pavilion Warming Centre

- ✓ Expanded access to up to 15 mats on a nightly basis until April 15, 2024.

### Brighthouse Pavilion Drop-in Centre

- ✓ Expanded access to daily warm space, 7 days per week, 12 hours per day until April 15, 2024.



- The Drop-in Centre and Shower Program, located in the Brighthouse Pavilion building, continued operations in 2023 and both were operated by Turning Point Recovery Society. They operated Monday to Friday during the day and provided daily meals, access to computers and the Internet, service navigation and referrals, as well as shower and laundry services to Richmond residents experiencing homelessness. These programs were funded through the UBCM Strengthening Communities’ Services Grant. In December 2023, the City provided additional funding to expand services for the remainder of the 2023/2024 winter season. Effective December 27, 2023, the Drop-in Centre began operating seven days per week, 12 hours per day. This will continue until April 15, 2024 when the program will revert back to the previous hours and days. In 2023, the Drop-in Centre and Shower Program had significantly higher numbers of visits, meals and showers provided than in 2022 (Tables 3, 4 and 5).

**Table 3: Brighthouse Drop-in Centre Visits by Month in 2022 and 2023**

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	TOTAL
<b>2022</b>	42	50	128	100	187	111	208	278	232	318	431	522	<b>2,607</b>
<b>2023</b>	454	490	547	398	562	531	552	680	568	887	902	747	<b>7,318</b>

**Table 4: Lunches Served at the Brighthouse Drop-in Centre by Month in 2022 and 2023**

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	TOTAL
<b>2022</b>	600	525	762	700	686	781	685	873	710	840	829	868	<b>8,859</b>
<b>2023</b>	983	941	841	631	900	968	770	1,018	755	640	920	708	<b>10,075</b>

**Table 5: Showers Provided at the Brighthouse Drop-in Centre by Month in 2022 and 2023**

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	TOTAL
<b>2022</b>	26	26	18	41	108	51	75	108	69	76	115	127	<b>840</b>
<b>2023</b>	118	93	108	137	169	173	105	173	142	138	142	88	<b>1,586</b>

- In 2023, The Salvation Army, the Richmond Poverty Reduction Coalition and local faith-based organizations provided nutritious meals to individuals experiencing homelessness who were unable to access community meal programs. The City, through the UBCM grant, provided \$33,500 in funding for Food Outreach Program operated by The Salvation Army and faith-based organizations through June 2023. In addition, \$6,000 in grocery gift cards were provided to local organizations to support additional food outreach initiatives.
- Throughout 2023, the City continued to work closely with many organizations, including the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction (MSDPR), Richmond RCMP and Vancouver Coastal Health, to provide coordinated outreach to connect individuals experiencing homelessness with critical supports and services in the community. This included work with the Richmond RCMP Detachment's dedicated Vulnerable Persons Unit (VPU) whose mandate includes outreach to individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness. From January to November 2023, the VPU conducted 46 joint outreach operations with MSDPR staff, representing more than a 150% increase over 2022 when there were only 18 joint outreach operations.
- The City's Joint Operations Team (JOT) currently serves as the primary group to coordinate and respond to concerns, complaints or issues that have an intersection with homelessness. This team consists of representatives from Community Bylaws, Building Approvals, Community Social Development, Community Safety Administration, Parks Operations, Richmond Fire Rescue, RCMP Operations, RCMP VPU, BC Emergency Health Services, MSDPR and Vancouver Coastal Health. From January to the end of November 2023, the JOT provided an integrated response to 24 complex homeless files. Eighteen of these files were successfully closed as the individuals involved moved on to other areas or other forms of shelter or housing.

## 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 then 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.

The increase in homelessness, combined with the increased complexity of individual needs, has a direct connection to the housing continuum and the need for appropriate types of affordable housing. For example, the need for supportive housing to move individuals out of shelters or off the street is outpacing access to available units and non-market housing. These units are needed to transition those individuals who may be ready to move from supportive housing into more independent housing but are not available in the community. This lack of affordable housing prevents movement along the housing continuum and creates a significant barrier for individuals seeking to transition out of homelessness. Significant work has taken place on the expansion of this continuum of housing and has been a focus for the City in 2023.

### Actions and Achievements

- RainCity Housing and Support Society, the organization that 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, and the aim to achieve greater housing independence. In October 2023, City Council approved a 3.5 year extension to the ground lease to BC Housing in order to continue to operate this valuable program while a permanent location for a new supportive housing building on City-owned land is developed.
- 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 September 2023 regarding the development of a new coordinated access and referral system. This system will provide standardized procedures for client intake and assessment of need along with a community-wide housing support service database. The system was launched in December 2023 in select communities and will be expanded to municipalities across the region, including Richmond, in 2024.



- In 2023, with funding from the UBCM grant, the City initiated work with community partners to explore enhanced solutions for discharge and transition planning practices for individuals experiencing homelessness leaving Richmond in-patient health care facilities such as Richmond Hospital. The project engaged in-patient hospital and addictions treatment providers as well as homelessness shelter and drop-in centre service providers to enhance processes to ensure that individuals exiting in-patient health care who had previously been or were experiencing homelessness prior to admission would have access to uninterrupted and seamless health care and supports in their communities. Key informants in this project included people with lived/living experience of homelessness who agreed to participate.

### Continuum of Supportive and Affordable Housing Options in Richmond

<p><b>Alderbridge Supportive Housing</b> 40 units – occupied</p>	<p>✔ City Council endorsed a 3.5 year extension to enable a seamless transition into a permanent location for supportive housing.</p>
<p><b>Aster Place Supportive Housing</b> 40 units – occupied</p>	<p>✔ Ensures that supportive housing units continue to be available while a permanent site, which is in development, is constructed.</p>
<p><b>Pathways Non-Market Housing</b> 80 units – in development</p>	<p>✔ Construction will commence in 2024. Anticipated occupancy is early 2026.</p>
<p><b>Rapid Housing Initiative Affordable Housing Project</b> 25 units – in development</p>	<p>✔ Construction will commence in early 2024. Anticipated occupancy by the end of 2024.</p>
<p><b>Permanent Supportive Housing</b> 60 units</p>	<p>✔ Funding has been allocated by the province and planning is underway. Anticipated occupancy is December 2027.</p>
<p><b>Affordable Housing Development</b></p>	<p>✔ The City is in conversation with BC Housing about a comprehensive affordable housing development.</p>

## 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

- The City Grant Program's Health, Social and Safety Grant stream provided support towards community-based homelessness service provision and food security. In 2023, \$111,895 in grant funding was used to help support a number of initiatives. These included a food distribution program by Immigrant Link Centre Society; a Drop-in Centre operated by Turning Point Recovery Society; community food outreach initiatives supporting vulnerable members of the population by the Kehila Society of Richmond and Pathways Clubhouse; a meal program operated by Church on Five and meal programs for individuals experiencing homelessness and isolation operated by Parish of St. Alban's and The Society of St. Vincent de Paul Vancouver Archdiocesan Central Council.
- The Richmond Community Homelessness Table, comprised of government agencies and community-based homelessness service providers, met regularly throughout 2023. The Table's aim is to enhance collaboration, address community needs, share information and align resources. Discussions focused on challenges and barriers the organizations or their clients are facing, emerging trends in homelessness, and current and upcoming initiatives to support individuals experiencing homelessness in the community.
- Through the range of programs and services funded through the UBCM Strengthening Communities' Services Program (see pages 12 to 16) 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.
- In 2023, the City continued to liaise with BC Housing, Vancouver Coastal Health, the MSDPR, RCMP, Richmond Fire Rescue and community and faith-based organizations to support individuals experiencing homelessness. Ongoing collaboration and advocacy on existing and enhanced services are key and ongoing.



- Advocacy continues with other levels of government for enhanced supports for the community including additional shelter and supportive housing options, enhanced outreach from other government entities, and increased access to mental health and substance use support including detox and treatment options.
- On December 6, 2023, City Council and senior staff met with the Honourable Jennifer Whiteside, Minister of Mental Health and Addictions; the Honourable Ravi Kahlon, Minister of Housing, and the Honourable Sheila Malcolmson, Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction and their ministerial staff. The City advocated to senior levels of government for additional funding for housing, mental health and substance use supports and supports to address the increased numbers of individuals experiencing homelessness in Richmond. Continued advocacy for the Province’s leadership to assist in responding to homelessness in Richmond is critically important.
- To further assist individuals experiencing homelessness, the City updated and disseminated resources to support access to information and referrals. Through regular weekly coordinated outreach conducted by members of the Joint Operations Team, vulnerable individuals received information and referrals to a range of programs to address housing, physical or mental health issues, substance use treatment and harm reduction supports.



## 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

- 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 2023.
- Throughout 2023, the City implemented two targeted awareness and education programs using provincial grant funding received through UBCM's Strengthening Communities' Services Grant Program.
  - Community Conversations: In February 2023, 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 65 people attended the three sessions. A self-guided version of these conversations has been created and will be added to the City website in 2024.
  - City Staff Homelessness Training, 'Working with People Experiencing Homelessness': City staff worked with members of the Homelessness Services Association of British Columbia (HSABC) to develop and host two levels of homelessness training for City employees who work directly with the public. Level 2 was an in-person, two-day session, and built on the information and concepts from Level 1 which was delivered in an online, self-paced format. Level 2 was launched in January 2023 and was completed by 155 employees by the end of the year. Level 1 continued to be offered throughout the year and was completed by 246 employees and community partner staff. This important training will continue to be available to City staff in 2024.



## 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 2023, 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. During this past year, the collaborative actions described in this report contributed towards achieving the Homelessness Strategy's vision.

Notable City actions in 2023 included the ongoing implementation of projects coordinated through the \$3.35 million UBCM Strengthening Communities' Services Grant, the ongoing provision of the Drop-in Centre and Shower Program, expanded Warming Centre spaces and the approval of new roles to support outreach to vulnerable members of the community who may be experiencing homelessness.

Further, the City continues to support the provision of non-market, affordable housing, through investments in temporary supportive housing for some of Richmond's most vulnerable populations, as well as the investments in more permanent affordable housing, which includes an 80-unit development led by Pathways. Finally, the City continues to support housing options for low to moderate income households through the continued implementation of its low-end market rental (LEMR) housing policy program, which has led to the construction of 517 affordable housing units, with many others having received preliminary approval in addition to those under review.

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 using its role as a leader to respond to the needs of Richmond residents at risk of or currently experiencing homelessness. Richmond-based service providers are well connected, understand the unique needs of members of the community who are experiencing homelessness and continue to build capacity to meet their evolving needs. While housing and homelessness is primarily a provincial mandate, the City continued to work with 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 Richmond residents who are experiencing homelessness.





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