

Attention to:

Annette Sharkey Executive Director Social Planning Council for the North Okanagan

Kim Flick
Director of Community
Infrastructure and Development
City of Vernon

Submitted by:

Urban Matters CCC 304 – 1353 Ellis Street Kelowna, BC V1Y 1Z9

&

Homelessness Services Association of BC 4445 Norfolk Street, Burnaby, BC V5G 0A7

Project Contact:
Matt Thomson, Community Housing
mthomson@urbanmatters.ca
604-235-1701



Table of Contents

1	Introducing Moving Forward: Building Homes, Strengthening Communities	1
2	Recommended Actions	2
3	The Last Ten Years: Progress on Housing and Homelessness in Vernon	4
4	Vernon Context	
5	The Strategy Process	10
	01 - Investing	16
	02 – Regulating and Incentivizing	17
	03 – Public Education and Awareness	
	04 - Systems Planning	20
	05 – Strengthening Services	21
	06 - Public Education And Awareness	23
6	Measuring Progress on the Plan	25
7	Glossary	

Appendices

Appendix A – Sample Implementation Plan

Appendix B – Summary of Best Practices

Introducing Moving Forward: Building Homes, Strengthening Communities 1

Situated just over a half hour drive north of Kelowna, in the heart of the Okanagan, Vernon is a fast-growing, diverse community rich with opportunities to live, work, play and visit. Agriculture, construction, tourism and manufacturing have driven the Vernon economy over the last few decades. With growth, come new economic opportunities, as well as challenges associated with increasing housing affordability issues and increasing homelessness.

In the years since 2007, when Vernon produced both its first municipal Attainable Housing Strategy and the Building Bridges strategy developed by the Social Planning Council of the North Okanagan, there has been significant effort and progress on addressing both housing affordability and homelessness. Over this period, the City introduced municipal policy to support new housing solutions and community partnerships focused on addressing homelessness and its associated issues. Still, the community has experienced significant housing pressures since 2014, including both a declining vacancy rate and increased cost of both rental and new development.

The challenges are complex and, in many ways, influenced by larger economic forces. With an understanding of these challenges, Moving Forward is an action plan building on work done by the municipality, the Social Planning Council of the North Okanagan, and the Partners in Action Committee.

Moving Forward offers an opportunity to align the municipality, community partners, and other key stakeholders such as provincial and federal partners to a common set of strategies for Vernon.

The Moving Forward consultant team, guided by the municipality and the Social Planning Council of the North Okanagan (SPCNO), engaged community partners through a process intended to align strategies to address housing and homelessness in Vernon. The process:

- Reviewed all previous work conducted by the City and SPCNO since 2007:
- Engaged with local stakeholders and people with lived experience through interviews, in-person focus groups, and community meetings
- Identified best practices designed to impact the challenges and issues identified by community;
- Developed draft strategies and reviewed these with key stakeholders;
- Solidified a community action plan that coordinates goals and activities.

Moving Forward provides an overview of the approach used to develop the strategy, outlines key context and background to the development of the strategies, and identifies action steps for strengthening responses to housing and homelessness.

Recommended Actions 2

Recommended actions are summarized below. These were developed through the engagement process and review of best practices in other communities. A sample work plan is provided in Appendix A describing how the Social Planning Council for the North Okanagan and the City of Vernon can implement the recommended actions.

ATTAINABLE HOUSING

01 - INVESTING

- 1. Develop an approach to acquiring land to leverage affordable housing.
- **2.** Explore models of inclusionary zoning that use different contribution models (e.g. units, vs. cash-in-lieu).
- **3.** Further explore financial incentives to invest in housing.
- **4.** Introduce capital grants for non-profit housing developments.
- 5. Support Council and senior staff in continuing to advocate to senior government for additional funding and resources.

02 - REGULATING AND INCENTIVIZING

- 1. Complete research on housing demand and supply. Use findings to inform incentives and City initiatives, as well as identify opportunities to address gaps.
- 2. Regulate short-term rentals.
- **3.** Refine the City's current DCC rebate model to match level of incentive to level of affordability that's achieved.

- 4. Explore reduced parking requirements for non-profit housing development. Develop a set of criteria to determine the feasibility of reduced parking requirements (e.g., type of housing, location, proximity to transit, etc.). Consider eliminating the requirement for a traffic impact study for non-profit housing developments under certain conditions or providing support for the completion of the study.
- 5. Consider allowing lock-off units.
- **6.** Consider incentives for homeowners and developers to install secondary suites.
- 7. Consider incentives for homeowners to rent their suites e.g., reduction of utility rate or tax incentives if quaranteed that the suite will be on the rental market for five years.
- **8.** Expand incentive programs for infill residential and purpose-built rental in areas west of downtown. Consider reviewing parking requirements, the Revitalization Tax Exemption program, the DCC grant, and any others.
- 9. Review housing agreement requirements on projects that receive incentives.
- 10. Formalize and communicate fast-tracking for approvals and permitting for affordable housing projects.
- 11. Explore opportunities to support affordable home ownership, such as reducing minimum home size to encourage a range of home sizes (e.g. tiny homes).

03 – PUBLIC EDUCATION AND AWARENESS

- 1. Build awareness of the need for and benefits of affordable housing projects through a public education campaign and ongoing communication strategy.
- 2. Develop educational and outreach support.
- **3.** Build capacity and collaboration among stakeholders to partner and pursue funding opportunities from senior government, such as new programs through BC Housing and CMHC.

HOMELESSNESS

04 – SYSTEMS PLANNING

- 1. Build on the newly establish Coordinated Access and Assessment Table (BC Housing, Interior Health, housing and service providers) to support tenanting of new housing coming on stream in a collective effort to end homelessness in Vernon.
- 2. Engage housing providers to explore options of adopting of a Housing First model.
- **3.** Identify opportunities to implement a housing first approach through a scattered site model.
- 4. Continue collaboration between City and PIA to achieve housing and service delivery goals.

05 – STRENGTHENING SERVICES

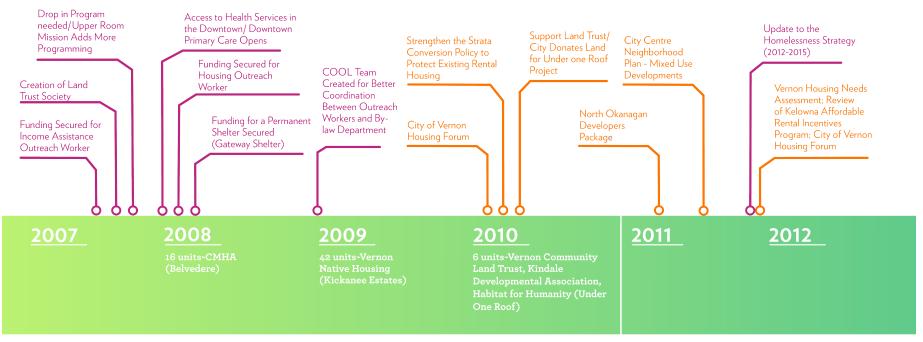
- 1. Introduce Shower Program that allows people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness to access showers and resources to meet basic hygiene needs.
- **2.** Explore opportunities to provide additional storage space (bins).
- **3.** Support through PIA, the City of Vernon's decision to provide more public toilets in the downtown neighbourhood.

- 4. Create a systems map to better understand current resources, assets, and gaps in services accessed by individuals experiencing homelessness in Vernon.
- **5.** Develop plan to better support youth aging out of care in Vernon.
- 6. Develop a plan to better support seniors or older adults at risk of homelessness.
- **7.** Continue to work towards Reconciliation with Indigenous organizations and individuals to understand gaps and needs, and by building on the cultural audit being completed by the Community Action Team / HART Project.
- **8.** Explore introducing Car 87 Mental Health Car program model in Vernon. (Car 87 is an initiative of the Vancouver Police Department which partners a constable with a registered nurse or registered psychiatric nurse to provide on-site assessments and interventions for people living with mental illness.)
- **9.** Look into initiatives to increase sense of safety and security in downtown core. Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of new initiatives including the Weekly Peer Clean Ups and the upcoming Folks on Spokes program.

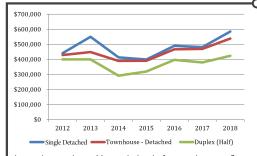
06 - PUBLIC EDUCATION AND AWARENESS

- 1. Provide opportunities for public of all ages to better understand homelessness through an awareness campaign, including working with the business community, City Council, schools and school district, neighbourhood associations, faith communities, and medical practitioners.
- 2. Develop process for working with and informing community regarding future temporary shelter, temporary modular developments as well as supportive housing to ensure public understands the projects and has an opportunity to engage with funders and host organizations.
- **3.** Increase support for development of affordable and supportive housing and homelessness services.

3 The Last Ten Years: Progress on Housing and Homelessness in Vernon

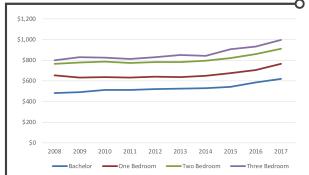


Indicator 1: Average Home Sales by Unit Type, 2012-2018



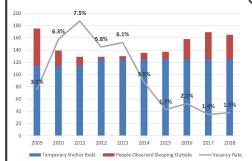
In 2014 home values in Vernon declined, after a peak in 2013. Since then, the average cost of housing in Vernon has been steadily increasing, and the current average sale price for a single-detached is \$585,000.

Indicator 2: Cost of Rental Housing, 2008-2017

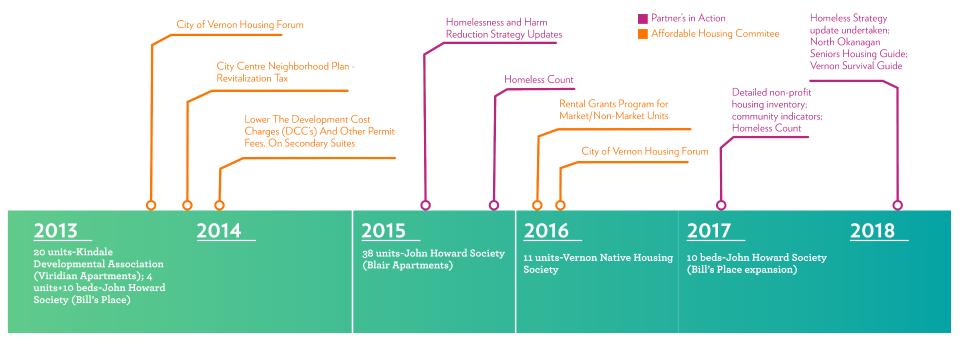


Between 2008 and 2015, rents rose incrementally in Vernon, about 1% to 4% per year. In 2015, however, rents started rising more rapidly, increasing by 5-6% per year depending on unit size.

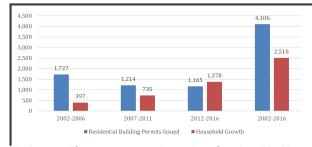
Indicator 3: Rental Vacancy Rate, 2008-2017



Between 2009 and 2014, Vernon's vacancy rate was high, ranging from 3% and 7.5%. Since 2015, the vacancy rate has been below what is considered a healthy vacancy rate (3 to 5%). Over this same time period, homelessness increased as the vacancy rate fell. In 2018, the vacancy rate was 1.5% which indicates a constrained rental market.

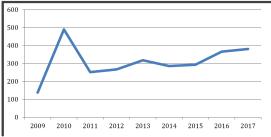


Indicator 4: Residential Building Permits & Household Growth in Vernon, 2006-2016



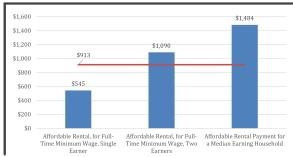
In the period from 2002 to 2011, the number of residential building permits issued by the City of Vernon outpaced the addition of new households in the city. However, between 2012 and 2016, the city grew by nearly 1,400 new households-significantly more household growth than over the previous fiveyear periods. This household growth also outpaced new residential building permits, showing that for the first time during this fifteen-year period the city was growing faster than new stock was being added.

Indicator 5: Individuals Accessing Gateway Shelter and Howard House



Although 2010 was the high point in terms of the number of individuals accessing the Gateway Shelter, 2011 showed a significant decline. The numbers have been steadily increasing since 2011, and 381 individuals accessed the Shelter last year.

Indicator 6: Affordable Rental Costs for 3 Household Groups vs. Cost of Average 2-Bedroom Rental, 2017



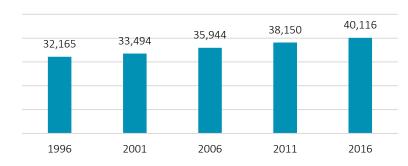
In 2017, a single person earning minimum wage and working full-time (40 hours/week) could only afford to pay \$545 per month for rent, while an average two-bedroom cost \$913 per month. In order to be able to afford an average two-bedroom, a single earner on minimum wage would need to reduce other household spending by \$368 per month, or work 268 hours per month, an average of 67 hours per week.

4 Vernon Context

Vernon has grown steadily over the past number of years at a high rate of growth. People are attracted to the region for the sunny weather, natural beauty, and recreational opportunities. Vernon is also the commercial hub for the North Okanagan and is the urban centre for nearby communities.

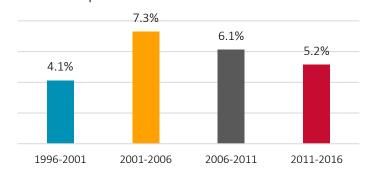
POPULATION & DEMOGRAPHICS

Population 1996-2016



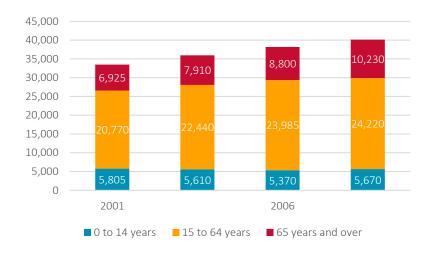
Source: Stats Canada, 1996-2016.

Population Growth Between Census Periods



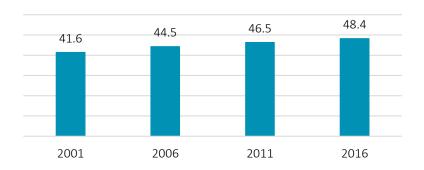
Source: Stats Canada, 1996-2016.

Vernon has an aging population and this trend is expected to continue, in line with many Canadian communities. Between 2001 to 2016, the population of people 65 and over grew from 20.7 percent of the total population to 25.5 percent, a significant increase. The median age rose from 41.6 to 48.4 over this same period.



Source: Stats Canada, 2001-2016.

Median Age, 2001-2016

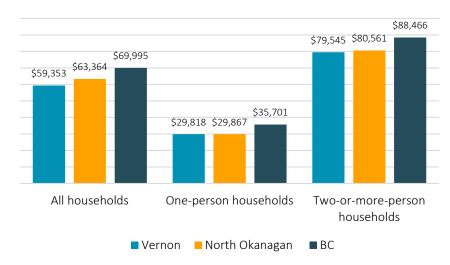


Source: Stats Canada, 2001-2016.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC DATA

Median incomes in Vernon are slightly lower than figures for the Regional District of the North Okanagan, and significantly lower than figures for the province.

Gross Income of Households, 2016

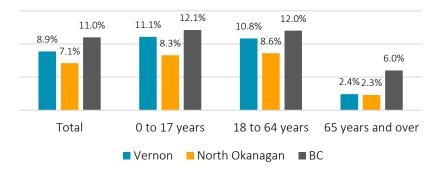


Source: Stats Canada, 2016 (based on 2015 income data).

Low income cut-offs (LICOs) are used by Statistics Canada to estimate the numbers of families in a population that may be considered low income. They are "income thresholds below which a family will likely devote a larger share of its income on the necessities of food, shelter, and clothing that the average family". 1 It does not provide a full picture of poverty or low-income status, but it does provide a starting point for understanding economic issues in the community.

Compared to the province as a whole, a smaller proportion of individuals in Vernon fall below LICOs. However, Vernon has a higher percentage of individuals from ages 0 to 64 that fall under LICOs compared to the North Okanagan overall, meaning that 4,955 individuals aged 0 to 64 are experiencing low-income. The rates of adults 65 and over that fall below the LICO is similar in both Vernon and the North Okanagan; however, it means that 1,435 seniors are experiencing low-income in Vernon.

Low Income (LICO) of Individuals, 2016



Source: Stats Canada, 2016.

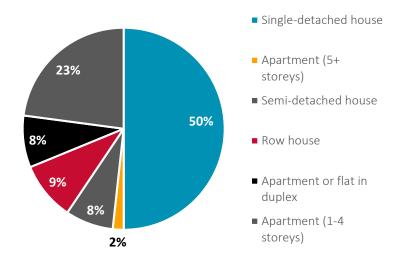
HOUSING DATA & TRENDS

Housing Stock

Vernon has a fairly diverse mix of housing. Single detached homes and low-rise apartments are the most common types of housing in the community, followed by row houses and duplexes. There are few apartments that are five storeys or higher.

¹ Statistics Canada, Low Income Cut-Offs. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75f0002m/2012002/lico-sfr-eng.htm

Dwelling Types, 2016



Source: Stats Canada, 2016.

Housing Indicators

As seen on Page 4, the cost to purchase a singe detached house in Vernon has continued to rise since 2014. For people that are renting, since 2008 the annual increase in rent has been between 1% and 4% increasing to 5%-6% per year since 2015.

Housing Need Indicators

Housing indicators refer to markers of housing issues and include adequacy, suitability and affordability. The tables below summarize the number of households in Vernon facing issues around these three key indicators.

ADEQUACY

Adequacy refers to the state of repair of a home. Homes that have adequacy issues are homes that require major repairs.

SUITABILITY

The suitability of a home is determined by the size of the home in relation to the size and composition of the household living in it. The definition of suitability is set by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) and is generally defined as no more than two people per bedroom with separate rooms for parents and children 5 and over of the opposite sex.

AFFORDABILITY

This measure identifies the number of households that pay 30 percent or more of their income on housing, a standard measure of affordability.

Table 1 and Table 2 show housing indicators for renting and owning households. Compared to owners, a large percentage of renting households, particularly lone parents and non-family households face at least one housing issue. Affordability is the most common issue and affecting a far higher percentage of renters than owners.

Table 1: Renting Households Experiencing Issues of Adequacy, Suitability or Affordability

Renting Households Experiencing Issues	Inadequacy	Unsuitability	Unaffordability	Inadequacy, unsuitability and unaffordability	Total Renters	Proportion of This Household Type
All Families	280	260	1,015	1,325	2,700	49.1%
Couples with Children	55	30	170	245	625	39.2%
Couples without Children	55	10	250	295	815	36.2%
Lone-Parent Families	120	110	490	565	835	67.7%
Non-Family Households	215	60	1,780	1,890	2895	65.3%
Total	495	320	2,795	3,215	5,595	57.5%

Source: Stats Canada, 2016.

Table 2: Owning Households Experiencing Issues of Adequacy, Suitability or Affordability

Owning Households Experiencing Issues	Inadequacy	Unsuitability	Unaffordability	Inadequacy, unsuitability and unaffordability	Total Owners	Proportion of This Household Type
Census Family Households	370	120	935	1,345	8,365	16.1%
Couples with Children	155	30	300	455	2,420	18.8%
Couples without Children	125	0	330	445	4530	9.8%
Lone-Parent Families	55	30	230	275	740	37.2%
Non-Family Households	155	10	1,065	1,170	3780	31.0%
Total	525	135	1,995	2,515	12,150	20.7%

Source: Stats Canada, 2016.

HOMELESSNESS

Homelessness is a growing concern not only in Vernon, but in communities across the province. A total of 7,655 individuals were identified as experiencing homelessness in the 2018 Report on Homeless Counts in B.C. The majority were sheltered (63%) and 37% were unsheltered. From 2009 until 2016, annual homeless censuses were conducted to count the number of camps in public places in Vernon. Since October 2016, a more detailed fall census/survey has been conducted to determine the number of people experiencing

On October 18, 2018, the Turning Points Collaborative and the Social Planning Council conducted the third annual fall census/survey and found:

- A total of 161 individuals who identified as experiencing homelessness (an increase from 153 in 2017)
- 31% were female and 65% were male; 4% indicated transgender/other
- The average age for sleeping outside was 43 years (men) and 34 years (women)
- The average age in the shelters was 47 years (men) and 47 years (women)
- 30% of respondents indicated they had been in the foster care system
- 34% identified as having Indigenous ancestry
- 38% have lived in Vernon for less than one year (the majority of people have lived in Vernon more than one year)
- 50% indicated that they had grown up in Vernon or had family connections
- Those surveyed in 2016, 2017 and 2018 indicated that the main causes of homelessness in Vernon are low incomes, high rents, and lack of rental availability. The constrained rental market has a big impact on people with barriers such as mental health or substance use issues.

hour period. Point-in-time counts are not effective at enumerating the hidden homeless and those at risk of homelessness.

homelessness in Vernon and to better understand the demographics, causes of homelessness and their needs. Counts provide a snapshot of homelessness in Vernon at a point in time. They are an undercount because not everyone experiencing homelessness can be found and not everyone found wants to be surveyed. Despite this, they are an accepted methodological tool for collecting data on homelessness at a single Point-in-Time.²

 $^{^{22}}$ It should also be noted that point-in-time counts are typically recognized as an undercount and represents only those individuals actually interviewed during a 24-

WHAT'S NEW

Since the project started in 2018, Vernon has been approved for a number of new housing initiatives and projects:

- 46 beds Our Place Shelter, Turning Points Collaborative
- 52 units My Place Apartment, Turning Points Collaborative
- 1 units Vancouver Resource Society
- 30 units Canadian Mental Health Association, Vernon and District
- 12 units City of Vernon/Land Trust
- 36 units Vernon Pensioners Accommodation Society
- Up to 8 Units Highlands of East Hill City of Vernon/Land Trust

Additionally, the Partners in Action and Social Planning Council of the North Okanagan have submitted an application to become one of the designated HPS communities to receive federal funding to address homelessness.

The Strategy Process

The Strategy development process occurred from July 2018 to February 2019 and consisted of 4 phases:

PHASE 1 - PROJECT INITIATION

The Urban Matters and Homelessness Services Association of BC team. held a start-up meeting with staff from the Social Planning Council of the North Okanagan and the City of Vernon to confirm objectives, scope of work, roles and responsibilities, key documents and measures and key stakeholders to engage. This meeting also provided an opportunity to identify key collaborators to guide the process, consisting of representatives of the Social Planning of the North Okanagan and the City of Vernon.

PHASE 2 – STRATEGY EVALUATION

To begin our evaluation, we carried out an initial review of Vernon's Attainable Housing Strategy and the Building Bridges Homelessness Strategy. This approach allowed us to collect key community metrics and combine them with key housing metrics while also identifying the baseline measurements of success guiding both plans. We then carried out early stakeholder engagement through interviews and workshops, including a focus group with individuals who are experiencing homelessness. We aimed to better understand what had worked well in previous strategies, how the strategies could have been stronger, and what changes occurred in the community since the development of the strategies. This process allowed us to do a comprehensive evaluation of the strategies' successes and the challenges associated with them, as well as their ability to achieve desired outcomes, to impact the housing system in Vernon, and to respond to changing conditions.

PHASE 3 – BEST PRACTICES REVIEW

As part of the strategy we researched and identified best practices in the field. We then reviewed our findings during the Community Stakeholder Workshop, which served as a priority-setting exercise. Participants were asked to identify the approaches and best practices that are most likely to have the greatest impact in Vernon. Finally, we summarized the best practices and stakeholder input in a report that identified the priorities and practices most likely to effectively address the issues identified in Phase 2.

PHASE 4 - PREPARE DRAFT AND FINALIZE STRATEGIES

Building on our findings and feedback from stakeholders, we developed and finalized a series of recommendations directing work on attainable housing and homelessness in Vernon for the next 5 years. Working with the Social Planning Council of the North Okanagan

and the City of Vernon, we identified and prioritized the recommended actions that are most likely to succeed in the community.

Defining Homelessness

The following is the Canadian Definition of Homelessness as defined by the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness.

Homelessness describes the situation of an individual, family or community without stable, safe, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it.

It is the result of systemic or societal barriers, a lack of affordable and appropriate housing, the individual/household's financial, mental, cognitive. behavioural or physical challenges, and/or racism and discrimination. Most people do not choose to be homeless, and the experience is generally negative, unpleasant, unhealthy, unsafe, stressful and distressing.

Homelessness describes a range of housing and shelter circumstances, with people being without any shelter at one end of the spectrum, and people being insecurely housed at the other. That is, homelessness encompasses a range of physical living situations, organized in a typology that includes:

- » Unsheltered, or absolutely homeless and living on the streets or in places not intended for human habitation;
- » Emergency Sheltered, including those staying in overnight shelters for people who are homeless, as well as shelters for those impacted by family violence;
- Provisionally Accommodated, referring to those whose accommodation is temporary or lacks security of tenure; and
- At Risk of Homelessness, referring to people who are not homeless, but whose current economic and/or housing situation is precarious or does not meet public health and safety standards.

It should be noted that for many people homelessness is not a static state but rather a fluid experience, where one's circumstances and options may shift and change quite dramatically and with frequency. Homelessness is a result of an interplay between structural factors, systems failures and individual circumstance. It typically results from a cumulative impact of events as opposed to a single cause. Systems failures such as kids aging out of care, hospitals and prisons discharging individuals into homelessness, coupled with structural factors such as a lack of income, access to housing and individual or relational factors such as family breakdown, or an individual mental health crisis are examples of the cascading impact of the key drivers of homelessness.

In the spirit of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action,³ the definition of homelessness recognizes the overrepresentation of Indigenous Peoples (including First Nations, Inuit, and Métis) amongst Canadian homeless populations. This overrepresentation is inextricably linked to the legacy of colonization and cultural genocide. The Definition of Indigenous Homelessness in Canada⁴ recognizes the need to consider the historical, experiential, and cultural perspectives of Indigenous Peoples, as well as the ongoing experience of colonization and racism. This is central to understanding and addressing Indigenous homelessness.

In addition, some groups are overrepresented in the homeless population. These include youth, women, families, people with mental health and/or addictions issues, people impacted by violence, seniors, veterans, immigrants, refugees, ethno-racial and racialized people, and members of LGBTQ2S communities. Many individuals experiencing homelessness may also identify with a number of the groups listed. As such, community responses must take such diversity into account and adapt to the local context.

³ https://nctr.ca/assets/reports/Calls to Action English2.pdf

⁴ https://www.homelesshub.ca/IndiaenousHomelessness

The Housing Continuum/Wheel⁵

The housing continuum or wheel developed by the City of Kelowna and adapted in Figure 1 on the following page consists of the range of housing options to meet the needs of households of all income levels, extending from emergency shelter and housing for the homeless through to affordable rental housing and homeownership.

The figure provides a framework for understanding that people may move across categories of the Wheelhouse throughout their lives.

The City also provides clear definitions for affordable and attainable housing on its website:6

Affordable housing is targeted to low/average income earners, for example those who earn minimum wage or individuals who are receiving government assistance such as seniors or people with a disability.

Attainable housing focuses on average/medium income households who have been priced out of the market or are struggling with higher rents.

⁵ Taken from the City of Kelowna's "Housing Needs Assessment" (2017) the Wheelhouse is a framework to help understand what a community's housing needs they are today and how may shift over time.

⁶ https://www.vernon.ca/homes-building/constructionrenovating/affordableattainable-housing

Figure 1: Housing Wheel

EMERGENCY SHELTER

Non-profit providers offer temporary shelter, food and other supportive services.



OWNERSHIP HOUSING

Home ownership can be fee simple, strata ownership or shared equity (ie. mobile home park, cooperatives) and includes multi-unit and single detached housing.



RENTAL HOUSING

MARKET HOUSING Primary market: 5+ purpose built units constructed for the purpose of long-term rental tenure, typically in apartments or townhomes Secondary market: private housing also contributes to the rental market and can include many forms of housing such as apartments, townhomes, secondary suites, carriage homes and single-family dwellings.



SHORT-TERM SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

Non-profit housing providers offer stable housing as a step between shelters and long-term housing. Stays are typically 2-3 years, with supportive services aligned with need.



supports aligned with need. The level of support varies in this category from supportive (low support), to assisted living (minor support) to residential care (full support).





SUBSIDIZED RENTAL HOUSING

Operated by non-profit housing providers, BC Housing and cooperatives. These organizations provide subsidized rents through a) monthly government subsidies or b) one time government capital grants for low to moderate income households.



SAFETY NET.

SHORT-TERM

SUBSIDIZED

RENTAL HOUSING

EMERGENCY

SHELTER

RENTAL

HOUSING

OWNERSHIP

HOUSING





Engagement Process

Engagement for the Strategy incorporated the perspectives from a wide range of community leaders and people with lived experiences in poverty and homelessness in an effort to foster a sense of coownership of the strategy and highlight existing assets and areas of improvement. This required building on findings from previous work, receiving feedback on the feasibility of applying the best practices identified, and incorporating what we heard into the recommendations. Key to creating a successful strategy that fits Vernon's context, taps into its resources, and will have the maximum impact, is understanding the community's perspectives.

The process involved a series of stakeholder interviews and workshops that included:

Initiation Meeting with Core Collaborators

Stakeholder Interviews

- » Interviews were conducted with local governments, nonprofit organizations, private developers, healthcare professionals, and others. A total of 23 interviews were completed in July and August 2018:
 - 12 from service providers who work with people who have lived experience of homelessness
 - 7 from the attainable housing sector, including forprofit and non-profit housing providers
 - 4 from stakeholders involved in both attainable housing and homelessness services
- Interview questions focused on attainable housing and homelessness services. Interviewees were asked questions targeted to their areas of expertise. While questions varied depending on the focus, they followed three major themes:
 - Reflections on what has worked.
 - Reflections on lessons learned from past work
 - Ideas for what the City and stakeholders should do next

Stakeholder Engagement Workshops

Workshops were conducted with people with lived experience of homelessness, attainable housing and homelessness services provider stakeholders.

On September 12, 2018, three workshops were held with the following groups: individuals with lived experience of homelessness, the Partners in Action committee, and the Attainable Housing Committee.

The purpose of these focus groups was to get comprehensive stakeholder input on the impact of the Housing and Homelessness Strategies and provide stakeholders with an overview of the process. The focus groups also provided an opportunity to share initial findings from the literature review and interviews, and obtain feedback on these findings.

Best Practices

Housing is a key determinant of health and safe, quality housing can play an important role in supporting the physical, mental, and social health of individuals and families. Homelessness has devastating impacts not only on the individual, but also on the health and well being of our communities. In response to the growing crisis in communities across North America, a number of innovative and emerging best practices and approaches have been developed to respond to the challenges.

In Vernon, through the Partners in Action Committee, the community has been active in addressing challenges related to homelessness and has also been quite active in regularly evaluating progress. Through the Partners in Action Committee, evaluations of the original strategy have been completed, as well as tracking of key indicators and assessments of progress on specific topic areas and recommendations. The evaluations, completed as part of this report, detail an impressive level of commitment and resulting success in

addressing recommendations. Based on a summary of progress contained in the 2016-2018 update, a large portion of the 2007 Attainable Housing Strategy recommendations as well as the corresponding update recommendations had been completed, including, but not limited to, the following:

- Establishment of a permanent shelter (Gateway Shelter)
- Creation of a drop-in program with wrap around services (Upper Room Mission)
- Outreach to homeless campers (COOL Team)
- Establishment of a Downtown Health Centre (IH Primary Care/A-Team)
- Creation of a Harm Reduction Strategy, and ongoing implementation
- Provision of access to an income and employment assistance outreach worker
- Access to recreation (Recreation Discount Program)
- Access to a housing outreach worker (Turning Points Collaborative and Vernon Women's Transition House)
- Community housing forums (2008, 2010, 2012, 2014)
- Creation of various coordination bodies (Emergency Food Action Network, Housing Action Team, Camp Okanagan Outreach Liaison [COOL] team, Centerville Neighbourhood Council, Vernon Survival Guide Annual Updates)
- 136 new affordable housing units (approximately a 30% increase in the affordable housing stock)

The following key best practice areas were investigated to address the homelessness and housing issues in Vernon:

Attainable Housina

- Investing in attainable housing
- Regulating and incentivizing attainable housing
- Building support for attainable housing

Homelessness

- Educating stakeholders and residents about homelessness and reducing stigma
- Addressing a lack of affordable housing
- Addressing service gaps

The summary of Best Practices is included in Appendix B. Strategy Frameworks and Key Theme Areas. The Strategy itself is divided into two frameworks: Attainable Housing and Homelessness. The former is intended to largely inform City policy and the direction of development of new housing across the housing spectrum in Vernon. The latter is intended to inform specific housing and service actions of key collaborators working to address homelessness in Vernon.

Each framework has three key theme areas. A complete implementation plan for these actions can be found in Appendix A.

Attainable Housing

- 1. Investing
- 2. Regulating and Incentivizing
- 3. Public Education and Awareness

Homelessness

- 4. Systems Planning
- 5. Strengthening Services
- 6. Public Education and Awareness

01 - INVESTING

Current Context & Highlights

As in other communities across the province, housing affordability has been a pressing issue in Vernon for over a decade. Despite municipal policy initiatives, housing challenges have intensified since 2015 as a result of increasingly low vacancy rates and high cost of housing. The goal of this strategy is to leverage current progress and existing assets in order to find creative and sustainable ways of maximizing the impact of investments in attainable housing.

Throughout the engagement process, the number one trend highlighted by interviewees was continued housing market pressure leading to high costs, a low vacancy rate, and significant housing demand, including from retirees and investors entering the Vernon housing market from elsewhere.



Best Practice Spotlight

Community / Project: Opal Community Land Trust, San Huan Island, Washington State

- Formed in 1989 with volunteers and received property in 1990 with offer of property at subsidised price and capital grants.
- First houses finished in 1995 (18 homes)
- Currently responsible for housing 135 families
- Parcels range from clustered homes in small neighborhoods to scattered individual properties, an apartment complex, and a small apartment/office development
- Land is owned by the Trust and leased to each homeowner who must qualify for mortgage to buy home
- Relies on donations, state and federal grants, low-interest mortgage loans
- Applicants must have lived in area for three years (unless no waiting list)

Completed Recommendations from Previous Strategy / Assets and Policies to Build On:

- Lowered DCCs and other permit fees on secondary suites
- Established rental grants program for market/non-market units
- Supported the leasing of City-owned land (for a nominal fee) to local non-profit organizations for the development of nonprofit housing
- Established rental grants program for market/non-market units
- Commitment to addressing short and long-term recommendations to the City of Vernon from the first housing strategy developed



Moving Forward:

- Develop an approach to acquiring land to leverage affordable housing.
- Explore models of inclusionary zoning that use different 2. contribution models (e.g. units, vs. cash-in-lieu).
- Further explore financial incentives to invest in housing. *3*.
- Introduce capital grants for non-profit housing developments.
- Support Council and senior staff in continuing to advocate to senior government for additional funding and resources.

02 - REGULATING AND INCENTIVIZING

Current Context & Highlights

Regulation has been highlighted as both the basis for achieving successful initiatives and as a potential barrier to success. Through the engagement process, individual interviewees noted several initiatives that they felt were successful. These include the combination of different incentives offered by the City, the Development Cost Charges (DCC) grant, relaxations in parking requirements for higher density developments, donation of land by the City, the positive working relationship between BC Housing, local non-profit housing societies, and the City of Vernon, as well as the work that's been done under the Aboriginal Homelessness Initiative. There has also been greater support for multi-family developments and the construction of purpose-built rental that were identified as positive trends.

On the other hand, engagement participants identified negative trends such as increased time required for new development applications and lower individual DCC grants because of greater demand for grants. As a response to these challenges, streamlining the development approvals process, continuing and increasing the DCC grant program, and allowing more housing types were identified as potential means of improvement.



Best Practice Spotlight

Community / Project: Short Term Rental Regulation in City of Rossland, BC

- In 2016, an "Unlicensed Short-Term Rental Advisory Committee" was struck to assist with reviewing the effects, impacts and issues related to unlicensed short-term rental accommodations within the City of Rossland.
- Review resulted in amendments to the Official Community Plan, Zoning and Business Licence Bylaws to more clearly

- identify what, where and how short-term rental accommodations are permitted in the City,
- Public information sheets were developed to clearly indicate the process on how to ensure compliance with the new City bylaws and regulations with respect to short term rental accommodations.
- Some highlights of the regulations:
 - o All operators of a short-term rental accommodations must be the permanent residents of the property being used
 - o Maximum 5% of total dwelling units can be short term rental units in the City
 - o Maximum density of short-term rental units will be "one per block" in the Old Rossland and Redstone areas of the City
 - Applications considered on a first come, first served basis
 - o All short-term rentals required to have a business license

Based on what we heard, the most commonly cited challenge was the City's parking requirements, followed by construction costs due to municipal regulations and Building Code requirements, including the cost of legalizing secondary suites. Another major issue raised was the need to regulate short-term vacation rentals (STVRs): other municipal approaches range from requiring business licenses to more comprehensive and restrictive approaches to limiting STVRs. In relation to municipal regulations, interviewees also noted projects faced challenges such as lengthy rezoning/approvals process, setback requirements, Zoning Bylaw restrictions on carriage houses, inflexible lot requirements, and low uptake of some municipal initiatives. Regulation emerged as one of the key elements in advancing housing initiatives.

Completed Recommendations from Previous Strategy / Assets and Policies to Build On:

- Measures that contributed to greater housing diversity almost exclusively focused on municipal regulations. The most frequently mentioned measures were greater density allowances through infill zoning, density bonusing, and neighbourhood-specific zoning; allowing secondary suites; and reducing parking requirements.
- Measures that contributed to improved affordability were those that reduced development costs, including allowing overhead powerlines, allowing bigger footprints on smaller lots, and reducing parking requirements
- Support for land trust/using City-donated land for the Under One Roof project
- Reviewed parking requirements for affordable units
- Establishment of the City Centre Neighbourhood Plan, which included mixed use developments and revitalization tax
- Expansion of permitted types of housing (carriage houses and secondary suites)



Moving Forward:

- Complete research on housing demand and supply. Use findings to inform incentives and City initiatives, as well as identify opportunities to address gaps.
- Regulate short-term rentals. 2.
- Refine the City's current DCC rebate model to match level **3**. of incentive to level of affordability that's achieved.
- Explore reduced parking requirements for non-profit housing development. Develop a set of criteria to determine the feasibility of reduced parking requirements (e.g., type of housing, location, proximity to transit, etc.). Consider eliminating the requirement for a traffic impact

- study for non-profit housing developments under certain conditions or providing support for the completion of the study.
- **5**. Consider allowing lock-off units.
- Consider incentives for homeowners and developers to 6. install secondary suites.
- Consider incentives for homeowners to rent their suites e.g., reduction of utility rate or tax incentives if guaranteed that the suite will be on the rental market for five years.
- Expand incentive programs for infill residential and purpose-built rental in areas west of downtown. Consider reviewing parking requirements, the Revitalization Tax Exemption program, the DCC grant, and any others.
- Review housing agreement requirements on projects that receive incentives.
- Formalize and communicate fast-tracking for approvals and permitting for affordable housing projects.
- Explore opportunities to support affordable home 11. ownership, such as reducing minimum home size to encourage a range of home sizes (e.g. tiny homes).

03 - PUBLIC EDUCATION AND AWARENESS

Current Context & Highlights

Throughout the engagement process, improved collaboration and communication came up as meaningful ways to advance initiatives. Several interviewees wanted to see City-developer interactions improved through better communications of attainable housing initiatives. They also highlighted the need to improve coordination between the City's Affordable Housing Committee members and City staff, developers, non-profit organizations, and BC Housing. Clear communication among key stakeholders will facilitate communication with the public.

Raising awareness and finding ways to involve the public in the conversation is key to building long-term support for these initiatives. The public must understand why these initiatives are important, why they make sense in the long run, why it is a good use of public money, and how they can actively support these initiatives. This approach will lessen stigma and foster public co-ownership of these initiatives. Greater collaboration among stakeholder will make the process of raising public awareness more effective.

Completed Recommendations from Previous Strategy / Assets and Policies to Build On:

- All City of Vernon staff have received cultural competency and Indigenous awareness training over the year
- The City's willingness to take a leadership role in the region
- Stakeholder commitment to improve housing initiatives
- The Affordable Housing Developer's Package developed through a collaboration between the City, Community Futures, and the Social Planning Council for the North Okanagan



Best Practice Spotlight

Community / Project: Information Package from the City of Kamloops, BC

- Created an information guide intended for private and nonprofit developers interested in getting involved in the affordable housing sector in Kamloops
- Package summarizes incentives and programs available by all levels of government



Moving Forward:

- Build awareness of the need for and benefits of affordable housing projects through a public education campaign and ongoing communication strategy.
- Develop educational and outreach support. 2.
- Build capacity and collaboration among stakeholders to partner and pursue funding opportunities from senior government, such as new programs through BC Housing and CMHC.

Homelessness

04 - SYSTEMS PLANNING

Current Context & Highlights

There have been several successful initiatives to address homelessness in Vernon. A coordinated, systems-based approach to understanding the drivers and solutions to homelessness is essential to the development of this strategy. Some of the challenges identified in addressing homelessness in Vernon include the need for more qualified and experienced shelter and frontline staff, better staff training, flexibility in the types of services provided, diversity in the services provided, increased coordination and communication between Interior Health and housing providers, enforcement and safety, substance use and prevention, food, and income security, provision of primary health care, and the need for low-barrier access to services and housing.



Best Practice Spotlight

Community / Project: Principles for Providing Services to People Facing Homelessness

- Client-centred service delivery meets the needs of individuals experiencing homelessness with mental illness and addictions better than service delivery approaches that prioritize efficiencies or expertise. What this means is adapting services to client needs, reducing barriers to services, and promoting harm reduction.
- Low barrier programs that do not require individuals to be abstinent or in treatment for mental illness make it easier for individuals to access services and stay in treatment.
- Harm reduction programs provide greater assistance to individuals requiring services and have positive impacts on neighbourhoods where drug use is prevalent.

- A Housing First approach where individuals are provided immediate access to housing (not shelter) without abstinence or treatment requirements improves opportunities to access treatment and other services. The Housing First approach is in contrast to the linear continuum of care that has traditionally been practiced in many communities where individuals facing homelessness and mental health and addictions are required to meet stringent requirements before being able to access housing.
- Emphasis on choice for those who require services and a recognition that each individual has unique needs and challenges that cannot be met through standardized programs.

Source: Adapted from University of Victoria study, "Housing and Harm Reduction: A Policy Framework for Greater Victoria", 2011, pg. 1.

http://homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/GVCEHPolicyFramework Jan 31 2011.pdf

Due to the complexity of an issue like homelessness, there are several factors to take into consideration when thinking about system planning. Throughout the engagement process, the challenges most commonly cited included:

- The housing market is under significant pressure. The vacancy rate is low and rental housing costs are high. The incomes of individuals experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness are low. When rental vacancy rates are low, people with mental health and substance use issues are typically at a greater disadvantage in securing rental housing.
- There is a lack of supportive housing in Vernon for those experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness.
- The opioid crisis has had a significant impact on the homeless population, service providers and the wider community.
- Advocates have indicated that there are systemic barriers that negatively impact people who are experiencing homelessness and make accessing services or supports challenging.

Completed Recommendations from Previous Strategy / Assets and Policies to Build On:

- Build on lessons learned from initiatives like the Gateway Shelter, collaboration among stakeholders, introduction of a Housing Outreach Worker, the Downtown Primary Care Centre, Upper Room Mission, and the COOL team.
- Provided funding for permanent shelter (Gateway), created drop in program (Upper Room Mission), provided access to health services downtown, secured funding for Housing Outreach Worker, and secured funding for Income Assistance and Employment Outreach Worker.
- Creation of the COOL team for better coordination between outreach workers and by-law enforcement.
- Providing employment services at Turning Points Collaborative (formerly the John Howard Society).
- Creation of the land trust society (Vernon + District Land Trust).

Moving Forward:

- Build on the newly establish Coordinated Access and Assessment Table (BC Housing, Interior Health, housing and service providers) to support tenanting of new housing coming on stream in a collective effort to end homelessness in Vernon.
- Engage housing providers to explore options of adopting of a Housing First model.
- Identify opportunities to implement housing first *3*. approach through a scattered site model.
- Continue collaboration between City and PIA to achieve housing and service delivery goals.

05 - STRENGTHENING SERVICES

Current Context & Highlights

Strengthening services and increasing access is pivotal for people experiencing homelessness. During the engagement process a number of initiatives currently existing outside of Vernon were brought forward as ways to strengthen services for people experiencing homelessness in Vernon. These include the need for opioid response, harm reduction, detox for alcohol and benzo use and recovery programs; staff training on working with people with increasingly complex challenges, gender and sexual orientation, cultural safety, and trauma; public education and awareness raising to reduce negative perceptions and stigma; and services for women in abusive relationships.

Interviews with key stakeholders also identified the overarching need for more housing options for individuals and families experiencing homelessness. This includes the need for permanent affordable housing, social and supportive housing, as well as a need for a women's stand-alone shelter and transitional housing. These housing needs are being driven by long waitlists for social housing for families and seniors, as well as a tight rental market, especially for single individuals, low-income families, and seniors requiring support.

Best Practice Spotlight

Community / Project: Storage Facility in the City of Kamloops, BC

- A mini-storage facility was opened in 2018 that provides 65 storage bins, as well as harm-reduction equipment, cellphone charging, needle disposal, and an address that can be used to receive mail.
- Provides a sense of security for homeless individuals and improves access to services when individuals do not need to worry about where to keep their belongings.

- Developed through a partnership between the City of Kamloops and the Kamloops Aboriginal Friendship Society.
- Community nurse offers drop-in services on Friday afternoons.

http://homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/GVCEHPolicyFramework Jan 31 2011.pdf

Connecting people to housing, as well as necessary supports and services are essential to alleviating homelessness. This requires optimizing efforts and understanding current needs and gaps. For example, participants with lived experience of homelessness felt they would be able to move out of homelessness if they had access to affordable housing, access to addiction treatment, ongoing recovery support, access to medical services, outpatient services for mental health, higher income assistance rates, finding work, access to basic life skills training, and access to a phone and mailing address. Participants also identified challenges they faced in accessing services and meeting their needs, including access to washrooms and laundry, lack of awareness of what services are available, lack of transportation options and bus fare, difficulty finding a safe space to camp, and poor security at shelters.

Completed Recommendations from Previous Strategy / Assets and Policies to Build On:

- Improved collaboration and communication stakeholders
- Public awareness campaign
- Lessons learned from successful programs and initiatives



Moving Forward:

- 1. Introduce Shower Program that allows people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness to access showers and resources to meet basic hygiene needs.
- 2. Explore opportunities to provide additional storage space (bins).

- **3.** Support through PIA, the City of Vernon's decision to provide more public toilets in the downtown neighbourhood.
- 4. Create a systems map to better understand current resources, assets, gaps, in services accessed by individuals experiencing homelessness in Vernon.
- 5. Develop plan to better support youth aging out of care in Vernon.
- 6. Develop a plan to better support seniors or older adults at risk of homelessness.
- 7. Continue to work towards Reconciliation with Indigenous organizations and individuals to understand gaps and needs, and by building on the cultural audit being completed by the Community Action Team / HART Project.
- **8.** Explore introducing Car 87 Mental Health Car program model in Vernon. (Car 87 is an initiative of the Vancouver Police Department which partners a constable with a registered nurse or registered psychiatric nurse to provide onsite assessments and interventions for people living with mental illness.)
- **9.** *Increase sense of safety and security in downtown core.* Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of new initiatives including the Weekly Peer Clean Ups and the upcoming Folks on Spokes program.

Best Practice Spotlight

Community / Project: Downtown Vancouver BIA

Community safety and crime prevention continue to rate highly as a priority concern for downtown Vancouver businesses. In response, the BIA's created a "Clean and Safe" initiative which includes:

- Clean Team Ambassadors who perform micro-cleaning services on sidewalks and in other public spaces, report cleanliness and graffiti issues to the appropriate organizations, and collect and reporting discarded needles found on the downtown streets. The BIA has partnered with a local social enterprise that hires individuals experiencing homelessness or those at risk of homelessness, to carry out the work. In 2017, the team provided 1,378 hours of microcleaning, collected 1,200 disposal bags of garbage, and 1,6000 needles.
- Safety Ambassadors who are responsible for helping achieve a clean, safe, and welcoming downtown. The Safety Ambassadors aid downtown businesses, residents, and visitors, and work closely with police, the City, and other organizations to help improve the downtown core. The Safety Ambassadors serve as a visible street presence within the DVBIA area and strive to identify and report environmental or safety hazards, vandalism and graffiti, crime-related incidents, illegal behaviour and business concerns. Other important activities include providing SafeWalk services and identifying and assisting with any quality of life concerns, such as providing referrals to extreme weather shelters or other available resources.

06 - PUBLIC EDUCATION AND AWARENESS

Current Context & Highlights

When interviewees were asked to describe the local context or other factors that impact the success of initiatives in Vernon, opposition to the development of new housing and other services to support those experiencing homelessness was raised. A lack of safety and security in the downtown core was also identified through the Activate Safety Taskforce. Interviewees also noted that Vernon has fewer supports and services compared with the larger nearby communities of Kelowna and Kamloops. Despite this, responses to homelessness have been coordinated and often very effective, with challenges arising in face of external forces (e.g. declining vacancy rates). There is a need for visible success stories in building awareness and encouraging public support.

The impact of negative public and media perceptions (real or perceived) can pose a risk to the successful development and implementation of housing, health and other homelessness support services. During the engagement process, interviewees described the need to increase awareness and understanding about the causes of homelessness and increase empathy, while also addressing community health and safety concerns. The most frequently mentioned opportunity was increasing education and awareness of the issues among local businesses, Mayor and Councillors, and residents. Collaboration among stakeholders was also frequently mentioned, including BC Housing, businesses, Chamber of Commerce, faith communities, neighbourhood associations, and medical practitioners. We also heard that there is a need for greater involvement and coordination among different levels of government and more senior government funding.



Best Practice Spotlight

Community / Project: Anti-NIMBY Public Education Campaign in Victoria, BC

- Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness created a "NIMBY Fact Sheet" to address common concerns and challenge common, but incorrect, assumptions about affordable housing development.
- The NIMBY Fact Sheet addressed concerns regarding property values, crime and safety, density and congestion, neighbourhood character, new resident behaviours and values, and unfair distribution of affordable housing projects within the city.
- This type of material can be used to educate Council, City staff, and non-profit staff on common concerns in the community and provide responses to them.

http://homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/GVCEHPolicyFramework Jan 31 2011.pdf

Completed Recommendations from Previous Strategy / Assets and Policies to Build On:

- The knowledge of those with lived experience with homelessness who can make a valuable contribution to housing programs
- ambassadors within stakeholder Champions and organizations and media who can echo the importance of these initiatives



Moving Forward:

Provide opportunities for the public of all ages to better understand homelessness through an awareness campaign, including working with the business community, City Council, schools and school district, neighbourhood associations, faith communities, and medical practitioners.

- Develop a process for working with and informing the community regarding future temporary shelter, temporary modular developments as well as supportive housing to ensure the public understands the projects and has an opportunity to engage with funders and host organizations.
- Increase support for development of affordable and supportive housing and homelessness services.

6 Measuring Progress on the Plan

Importantly, monitoring progress allows the community to celebrate wins and create momentum with community members, funders, and the sector working hard to implement the changes.

Below are some key indicators to include in monitoring progress. Many of these are already collected by the PIA or the City. These indicators are for the plan as a whole. Specific indicators for each recommended action can be found in the sample implementation plan in Appendix A.

Lived Experience

- Housing/shelter quality, security of tenure, affordability and safety (actual and perception of these improvements)
- Case management services received
- Access to appropriate supports to address diverse needs within the social serving system and mainstream public systems (e.g. addiction, employment, education) ·
- Process of referral and intake into programs and housing
- Housing placement, stabilization and aftercare supports
- Perception of quality of life, including sense of belonging, participation in community activities, connection with friends and family
- Evidence of systematic, effective and meaningful inclusion of individuals with lived experience in community coordination and decision-making across the social serving system

Homeless Serving System

- Steady tracking of the number of sheltered and unsheltered individuals experiencing homelessness
- Percentage of positive exits in the homelessness prevention system (above 90%)
- Proportion of unsheltered individuals are engaged with services and have been offered low-barrier shelter and housing
- Proportion of those who exit homelessness returning to homelessness within 12 months

Housing Related Indicators

- New housing starts, particularly of multi-family housing
- Number of new purpose-built rentals proposed or being brought online
- Number of non-market units by housing type (below market, subsidized, supportive, etc.)
- Average rental rates and vacancy rates
- Sales prices by unit type
- Income levels, particularly relative to rental and sales prices
- Development trends (what types of homes are developers building / seeing interest in)

Glossary

Many of the terms used to discuss housing have specific definitions that are not always widely understood. This section defines some of the key terms used in this document. In some cases, specific references are provided to align with other organizations. These definitions are also drawn from Here to Help BC.

ABSTINENCE-BASED HOUSING

Housing where tenancy is contingent on abstinence from drugs or alcohol. Generally, tenants are required to be already abstaining when they move in and may lose their tenancy if they relapse. This type of housing is intended to provide a safe space for individuals recovering from substance use. However, those faced with relapse may face crisis if they lose their home.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Homes targeted to low/average income earners, for example those who earn minimum wage or individuals who are receiving government assistance such as seniors or people with a disability.

ATTAINABLE HOUSING

Homes for average/medium income households who have been priced out of the market or are struggling with higher rents.

EMERGENCY SHELTER

Emergency shelters provide short-term shelter for people in crisis. They are not intended to be used over long periods of time. Sleeping areas are generally shared with others and there may be limited space for storing belongings. Shelters may also provide meals or other services to people using them.

HARM REDUCTION

Harm Reduction International defines harm reduction as "policies, programmes and practices that aim to minimise negative health, social and legal impacts associated with drug use, drug policies and drug laws. Harm reduction is grounded in justice and human rights - it focuses on positive change and on working with people without judgement, coercion, discrimination, or requiring that they stop using drugs as a precondition of support." Often used in relation to homelessness and substance use, harm reduction in the housing sphere refers to policies and approaches that focus on providing lowbarrier housing to individuals who use drugs and alcohol.

HOMELESSNESS

The following is the Canadian Definition of Homelessness as defined by the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness. "Homelessness describes the situation of an individual, family or community without stable, safe, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it. It is the result of systemic or societal barriers, a lack of affordable and appropriate housing, the individual/household's financial, mental, cognitive, behavioural or physical challenges, and/or racism and discrimination. Most people do not choose to be homeless, and the experience is generally negative, unpleasant, unhealthy, unsafe, stressful and distressing."7

HOUSING FIRST

The Government of Canada defines Housing First as "an approach that focuses on moving people who are chronically and episodically homeless as rapidly as possible from the street or emergency shelters into permanent housing with supports that vary according to client need. The supports are provided by a case management team and/or a case manager that serves as a main point of contact for the client

⁷ https://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/attachments/COHhomelessdefinition-1pager.pdf

from assessment to follow-up." 8 It is based on five core principles: immediate access to permanent housing with no housing readiness requirements, consumer choice and self-determination, recovery orientation, individualized and client-driven supports, and social and community integration.

LOW-BARRIER HOUSING

Housing with minimum requirements of tenants with the goal of providing safe and longer-term housing that is not contingent on specific behaviours.

PERMANENT HOUSING

Housing that is long-term, with no maximum length of stay.

SCATTERED SITE HOUSING

Scattered site housing is an approach to providing supportive or other low-income housing through individual sites throughout a community, instead of concentrated in a single building or neighbourhood. The purpose of this approach is to increase choice and reduce stigma for individuals and families accessing this supportive and other lowincome housing.

SUPPORTIVE/SUPPORTED HOUSING

The Homeless Hub defines permanent supportive/supported housing as housing that "combines rental or housing assistance with individualized, flexible and voluntary support services for people with high needs related to physical or mental health, development disabilities or substance use. It is one option to house chronically homeless individuals with high acuity. Usually, PSH units are located in one home or building. It could include rooms in an individual house or several or all units of a building. PSH units could be scattered-site units depending upon the acuity level of the individual and the availability of the supports (provided either through home visits or in a community-based setting)."9 Support services may include life skills training, medical care, social activities, substance use rehabilitation, and case management.

TRANSITIONAL HOUSING

Housing that is time-limited. Supports in transitional housing depend on the program and the individual or family's needs, but may include affordable rental, supportive housing, or independent housing.

⁸⁸ https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/communities/homelessness/housing-first.html

⁹ https://www.homelesshub.ca/solutions/transitional-housing/permanent-supportivesupported-housing

Appendix A

SAMPLE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The following is a sample implementation plan provided as a resource for the City of Vernon and the Social Planning Council. The actions outlined in the plan can be prioritized and adapted, depending on staff capacity and/or access to external grants.

Appendix B

BEST PRACTICES SUMMARY