

City Staff Report

Report Date: August 31, 2022

Meeting Date: Sept 6, 2022

To: Mayor & Council

From: City Manager Byron Johnson

Subject: Review of the City's Housing Options for Vulnerable Populations

Purpose

In 2020 Council received a Covid Restart grant from the Province. \$100,000 from that grant was allocated by Council towards supporting vulnerable populations. To date that funding is unspent, staff is planning to engage a consultant to assist with a review of the City's role regarding vulnerable populations, and to provide recommendations to help as the City moves forward in areas in which it has social responsibilities.

One outcome of the current rezoning application at 383 St Laurent has been a lot of discussion in the community regarding housing vulnerable populations. The three main areas that are tied to the discussion about housing vulnerability are housing affordability and availability, mental health issues and addictions issues. These are driving some of the newer trends such as encampments on public property and the steadily growing numbers of homeless people. Most municipalities in BC are struggling with the same issues and trends.

The recent engagement by BC Housing has shown that the City needs an overall strategy and roadmap to help to direct our efforts. The goal is to provide advice to a new Council, and drive the 5 year Strategic Plan, as well as provide useful community feedback to BC Housing for future opportunities. Ideally, this visioning process should occur in advance of future Provincial investments in Supportive or Shelter housing proposals. It bears repeating that the goal is to develop a community based plan that takes into account the specific needs and challenges in Quesnel and proposes appropriate solutions.

Specifically, the consultant will be tasked with the following:

- to review the services provided to vulnerable populations by the various social agencies and service providers operating in the City, including looking for gaps in service that should be filled,
- to consider best practices from other jurisdictions to determine if there are new areas for the City or others to consider,
- to specifically consider the Shelter operations in the city, reviewing the number of units required, the appropriate location(s) for those units and make recommendations on the operating model,
- to specifically consider Emergency Shelter operations (units, location, operating model),
- to provide recommendations regarding temporary Indigenous housing needs that arise due to the distances from reserve populations to service centers in Quesnel.

This consulting work is to be done by closely working with the various stakeholders groups and intending to engage with Northern Health, and BC Housing and other Provincial agencies. Public engagement throughout the process will also be a key requirement.

This process will be lead by the Mayor and the four First Nation Band Chiefs in this area, specifically Lhtako Dene, Nazko, Kluskus (to be confirmed) and ?Esdilagh First Nations. They will lead throughout this process including the selection of the consulting team.



Recommendation

THAT Council receives this report for information.

Financial Implications

The City is holding \$100,000 of funding earmarked towards Support for Vulnerable People which originated in the Covid Restart grant from the Province. This funding has already been allocated by Council, and this project fits within this allocation. The amount for this specific item has not been determined at this point.