



## COUNCIL REPORT

To: Mayor and Council

Date: June 11, 2024

From: Ron Mattiussi, Interim CAO

File No: P 24 -12

Subject: **Westside Resource Hygiene Centre**

Report Prepared by: Melissa Hunt-Anderson, Community and Social Development Coordinator

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### **RECOMMENDATION** to Consider and Resolve:

**THAT** Council direct staff collaborate with the social service sector providers to pilot a new resource hygiene centre to support people experiencing homelessness and housing insecurities within our community.

### **STRATEGIC AREA(S) OF FOCUS**

**Strengthen Our Community** – We will provide opportunities for the residents of West Kelowna to build connections, celebrate successes, embrace the community's strengths and diversity, address shared needs, and contribute to shaping the community's future.

The Hygiene Centre concept aligns with Council's strategic priorities of *Strengthen our Community* as the Centre proposes to "address shared needs and contribute to shaping the community's future". As well, the new centre aligns with Council's strategic priority to *Foster Safety and Well-Being* as it will support the City to "pursue through direct action, advocacy, and partnerships with Westbank First Nations and local service providers, investments in community health...and other services that foster safety and well-being in West Kelowna."

As well, the new Centre's concept has strong alignment with our City's *Community Vision of Providing Opportunities for each of us to Feel at Home in 2040*: "Effective and innovative programs, in partnership with our neighbours, other levels of government, non-profits that are helping people to end the cycle of homelessness."

### **BACKGROUND**

Like many communities in BC, West Kelowna is experiencing a high cost of living and housing affordability crisis. Reports from the Central Okanagan Food Bank Westside location indicates that seniors and dual-income-earning families are accessing the Westside Food Bank at higher rates than ever reported, and their food hamper distribution numbers have doubled since 2022. Both the City's [Housing Needs Assessment](#) and

[Housing Strategy](#) highlight the lack of all types, forms and sizes of affordable housing in the community, especially for seniors on fixed incomes, and people experiencing homelessness. Over 21% of households in West Kelowna are paying more than 30% on housing, and this is forcing households into precarious housing situations which can perpetuate and exacerbate the cycle of poverty.<sup>1</sup> As of June 2024, the City's Bylaw Community Support Officer reported 60-65 people experiencing homelessness in West Kelowna, which is three times higher than what was observed last year at this time. The West Kelowna Emergency Shelter is often full, and the Rapid ReHousing Program at the Super 8 Motel closed on March 31, 2024.

Current Bylaw reports/stats and information sharing at the Greater Westside Hub – Situation Table (Westside Hub) indicate that the growing number of unhoused individuals is creating community challenges. Negative encounters with the unhoused population are detracting from the local business community, and creating a strain on City Services, including Bylaw, RCMP, outdoor operations staff who have interactions with the homeless population (i.e. Parks, Public Works, etc.), and Business Licensing. There are many complex reasons that create homelessness in the community, and addressing these collaboratively with multiple levels of government, community members and the private, business sector continues to be the preferred approach.

The new West Kelowna City Hall has opened to the public, and new ORL Library – Westbank Branch will open in June with many more community spaces becoming available to the public, including the unhoused population. The West Kelowna community offers diverse population groups suitable, and appropriate spaces that are welcoming and provide them with opportunity for safe gathering in these spaces:

- senior centre for seniors,
- skate park and youth centre for youth and teens,
- childcare/family centres and playgrounds for children and families, and
- community halls for general community members.

Similar to the work the City is doing to expand other community resources and services in West Kelowna funded by Provincial Ministries (i.e. \$10aDay Childcare), the Resource Hygiene Centre will be a steppingstone for advocacy for additional, increased funding supports for people experiencing homelessness in West Kelowna. It is important that the City responds to this community concern in a way that has the maximum benefit for all community members. As well, the unhoused community need a space to be referred to by other community agencies, including our City staff, Bylaw, RCMP, JBMAC staff, and Library staff and other businesses in the Westbank Centre.

### **KANDU – Operational update**

Historically the only indoor gathering space available for unhoused individuals was located at KANDU (2436 Main St., West Kelowna), which provided outreach programs,

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<sup>1</sup> [Focus on Geography Series, 2021 Census - West Kelowna \(Census subdivision\) \(statcan.gc.ca\)](#)

harm reduction supplies, and wellness supports (i.e. workshops, healthy snacks, and community referrals) to vulnerable community members.

In the Fall of 2023, KANDU was provided with additional resources: extra meals to give out to their clients provided by Turning Points Collaborative and clothing and hygiene supplies from Salvation Army. Although this was welcomed, it created a greater workload for the organization. Last month, KANDU informed the City and social service community that it will be decreasing its services and will not be providing meals, donated clothing or hygiene supplies to their clients. Based on this, the need for additional supports has increased.

## **Pilot Project - Westside Resource Hygiene Centre**

City staff have been working closely with the members of the Greater Westside Hub to find solutions to support both the unhoused and business community. Currently, there aren't any weekly, year-round hygiene, or resource supports available to the unhoused such as washrooms, showers, a free laundromat, or hot meal programs in West Kelowna. As well, in general, there is a lack of physical space in the Westbank Centre for service providers to lease/buy to open satellite locations to deliver their services and programs.

As well, there is a need for these resources to be co-located in a physical location for social service sector providers to provide in-person case management, housing/shelter referrals, counselling (mental health and addiction) and wound care supports. The co-location of support services along with the hygiene and resources will decrease street entrenchment, as the focus of the new space will be to support health, wellness, and a pathway to housing.

The proposed pilot project: **Westside Resource Hygiene Centre** is proposed to be located at 2545 Churchill Rd., and would provide meals, clothing, harm reduction supplies, and hygiene supports while connecting the unhoused community with social service staff to provide case management, mental health, and addiction services. The C1 zone allows for the permitted use of the day-services that the service providers are outlining to support the West Kelowna unhoused community; this new Centre would be similar to Metro Central (Café & Hygiene Centre at 1262 St. Paul St., Kelowna).

The Centre would fill a large gap in our community, especially case management supports for people experiencing homelessness. The new Centre will be designed for anyone who does not have access to shelter (living in public spaces) or appropriate housing, as well as community members who are insecurely housed ("couch surfing"). There will be a wide range of community members accessing the Centre, from people who are considered chronically homeless or street entrenched, to those who have recently lost their housing and urgently need supports to get housed rapidly.

The causes of homelessness is usually the result of the cumulative impact of several factors, rather than a single cause. As such, the new Centre will have shared

programming space for diverse network of community and social service providers to work with the unhoused individuals on focused strategies that are reflective of the unique situation that brought them into homelessness. The Centre would not just provide food, clothing, and harm reduction supplies, but it would also offer supports and opportunities to support unhoused people to change their circumstances. The Centre will also help the City and partnering agencies to collect data and research to better understand the causes and trends of why our community members are falling into homelessness so that collectively and collaboratively, we can advocate for more resources, funding and supports to the appropriate Provincial Ministries.

The Kelowna Gospel Mission (KGM) is interested in exploring its capacity to lead the “Westside Resource Hygiene Centre” with collaborative organizational support as outlined below:

<u>Service Provider</u>	<u>Service/Program</u>
<b>Kelowna Gospel Mission (KGM)</b>	Provide leadership, program development and site management as the lead organization; provide staff and volunteers to run the Centre, provide case management and service navigation support, laundry services, meals and hygiene supports (washroom/showers)
<b>Canadian Mental Health Association</b>	Provide services/staff to support mental health and wellness; Rent Bank support and rent supplement supports
<b>Turning Points</b>	Provide Shelter Hub program: shelter diversion support staff 1 day per week; extra hot meals from Bartley to the Hub
<b>Hope Outreach</b>	Staff time and services one day/week to deliver <i>Our Women</i> program for women who are sexually exploited
<b>Central Okanagan Food Bank</b>	Provide food supports and in-kind donation of space
<b>Salvation Army</b>	Provide clothing, blankets, and hygiene supplies
<b>Piers – Partners in Resources</b>	Provide housing navigation supports, rent supplements and employment supports
<b>Interior Health</b>	Provide staff under a new Integrated Health Outreach Team: NP, RNs, SW, LSW, Indigenous Navigator to provide “field” outreach work
<b>KANDU</b>	Client referrals to new Centre and
<b>Westbank First Nations</b>	Provide Wellness Advocate staff on the steering committee

## **Support for new Resource Hygiene Centre:**

### Social and Community Service Providers:

Please see Attachment 1 – Letters of support from community and social service providing organizations who service the Westside and community members experiencing homelessness.

### **Benefits**

- **Opportunity to create solution together:**
  - City staff will take part in a Social Service Provider Steering Committee, which will meet regularly to discuss the programs and services and evaluate the pilot for successes, gaps and challenges.
  - As well the City will chair a Community Advisory Committee to regularly meet with neighboring residents, businesses to review the program and understand and troubleshoot any challenges that are arising from the Centre.
  - Kelowna Gospel Mission will collaborate with City staff, established and new service providers in the Westside to increase the impact of service delivery.
  - Funding support (i.e. nonprofit and local government grant opportunities) to complete tenant improvements of the site to support the project and ongoing funding to sustain the programming staff and operations of the Centre.
  - Collaboratively advocate to Provincial government to fund this successful, supportive homelessness diversion model
- **Access to large, multipurpose space:**
  - The 3000sqft private, indoor meeting space for partner groups to provide case management, mental health, addiction, wound care/basic health checks, housing and employment supports.
  - Common space for washrooms/showers, laundry room, and dining/gathering.
- **Divert unhoused population to a space that will provide them with health, wellness and homelessness diversion supports:**
  - Churchill property is further away from the City's more prominent general community spaces (i.e. new City Hall, ORL Westbank Library, Skate Park, JBMAC, Westside Youth Centre) which are frequented by children, seniors, and families.
  - Having a Centre to redirect unhoused people will decrease the loitering and congregation around Main St. and the new City Hall.
  - Colocation of multiple, expert social service providers to provide important resources, services and referrals specific to needs of unhoused people.

- **Decrease garbage on the streets:**

- Access to washing machines/laundry service so that unhoused people can wash their clothes instead of discarding them.
- Unhoused people will have access a bathroom during the day.
- Clients of the new program will receive meals and food supports inside the space and decrease the amount of food packaging littered on the streets.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

None. The proposal is being funded by service providers and there is no financial burden on the City.

## **CONCLUSION**

It is important that the City continues to work in collaboration with the social service providers to provide input and recommendations to create a space for the unhoused community that the City supports and feels will have an important impact on the whole community. This collaborative effort will help to foster and encourage positive interactions and intersections between unhoused people and other community members. Having the hygiene components at the Centre will support the unhoused people to get clean, properly fed to be prepared for the case management supports offered by the social and community service sector staff. This program will not reinforce street entrenchment but will support people struggling with homelessness and housing insecurity to get the supports and resources they need to find stable housing, as well as any mental health and addiction supports needed to improve their health and well-being. And like other community-led and community-created initiatives, the Resource Hygiene Centre will provide data and research to provide the Provincial Ministries to advocate to increase funding to our community to support homelessness initiatives, including prevention.

### **Alternate Recommendation to Consider and Resolve:**

#### **Option No. 1:**

**THAT** Council direct staff to bring more information forward for Council to review and decide to collaborate with the social service sector providers to pilot a new resource hygiene centre to support people experiencing homelessness and housing insecurities within our community.

**Option No. 2:**

**THAT** Council not support the proposed resource hygiene centre pilot project.

**REVIEWED BY**

Brent Magnan, Director of Development Approvals.

Corinne Boback, Legislative Services Manager / Corporate Officer

Trevor Seibel, Deputy CAO

**APPROVED FOR THE AGENDA BY**

Ron Mattiussi, Interim CAO

Powerpoint: Yes  No