

ATTACHMENT B



RISEBRIDGE

520 Prideaux St. | Nanaimo, BC V9R 2N7
risebridgeproject@gmail.com | risebridgeproject.ca

Information Report

DATE OF SUBMISSION: February 11th, 202

AUTHORED BY: RISEBRIDGE

Overview

Purpose of Report:

To provide Council with an overview of current daytime indoor services for vulnerable populations and to emphasise which services offer accessible daytime shelter space during cold weather and otherwise.

Background

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Mandate: Offer advocacy, connection opportunities and trauma informed support for our marginalised community members with an emphasis on BIPoC.

Please see the below model of our services and support structure. We operate on a decolonized, community collaborative framework that respects and includes professional, educational and peer-lived experience equally, to offer tangible advocacy towards community calls for action and social justice efforts.

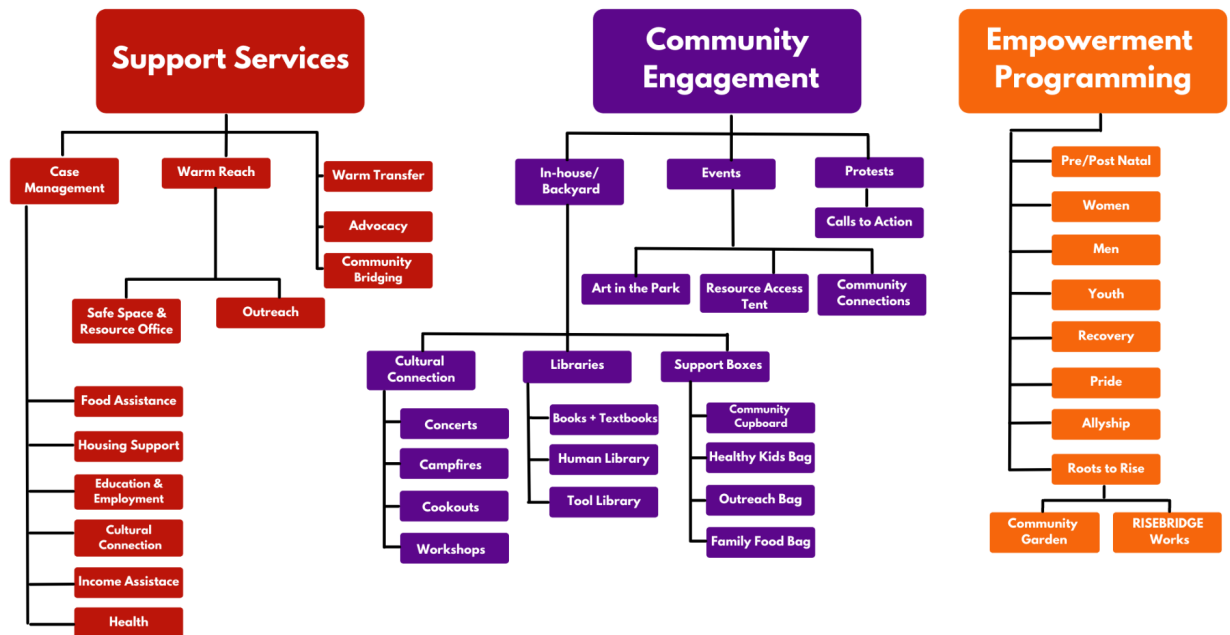


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MIDISLAND COMMUNITY CONNECTION SOCIETY

We have been in communication with City leadership trying to clarify that we have been, and always will be, advocating for increased service accessibility, coordination and immediate action. Our intentions are not to demand funding for our organisation and dismiss the efforts of others. We exist to help support community and fill the gaps in our current service options, as well as offer active advocacy and tangible opportunities for BIPOC and other marginalised community members where needed.

We would also like to confirm that the warming centre we ran was called *WarmReach*, and we have continued this program in a diminished capacity on a daily basis using funds from United Way, Cat Team and crowd sourced community donations.



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Although the Council adopted the motion to meet with Risebridge to coordinate a report, the details, timing and direction for this motion has been confusing, despite the urgency of the timeframe and crises we are responding to.

Now that we have received the information report assembled by the City Managers, we have been able to create a response report expounding on the gaps in social services that vulnerable populations, peers and service providers have been trying to convey. We were asked to prepare and submit this report within a day, following our last meeting with City Management at 10:00 am Thursday February 10, 2022.

We are aware of the long term action plans that are currently in place. RISEBRIDGE respectfully acknowledges the past actions and intentions that have existed within our community to respond to our unhoused and vulnerable population concerns. We recognize the continued efforts of front line workers and organisations that are supporting in great ways, and wish only to help advocate for more service provision and immediate action to help our current crisis and emergency situation within the city of Nanaimo.

Considering safety is a top priority for all decisions being made, we beg the question, where are people supposed to go? Where does an unhoused individual seek shelter and safety in the City of Nanaimo?

Discussion

As mentioned above, although the service is no longer provided at 380 Terminal, *WarmReach* is still a program offered by RISEBRIDGE on a daily basis. Including WarmReach, the current daytime drop-in spaces are as outlined in TABLE 1. We also included indoor spaces that simply offer services that are offered indoors but are not drop-in spaces where people can spend time other than receiving services for the sake of the discussion Mr. Lindsay included in his report.

TABLE 1

Warming Centre - 489 Wallace	-10am-3pm daily -capacity: 12 person	Hits capacity, weather dependent
Wesley Overdose Prevention Site	-11 am-9pm daily - for individuals injecting drugs	Only accessible to those who are injecting drugs, most drug users are currently smoking/inhaling. Some drug users are trying to detox.



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		Many unhoused individuals do not do drugs.
Social Centre 290 Bastion Street	-Monday 10am-4pm Wednesday 12-6pm Friday 10-4pm -Capacity: 15 People	
New Hope Centre Meal Program	-8-10am, 12-1pm (ending in 2 weeks) and 4-5:30pm -Capacity for several dinners. Hits capacity daily, also has a line indicating high demand	Is not a warming centre, but is being used as one. This service always has a line up. When lunch ends soon, this service will often be the only thing open and accessible at the times that it is.
Caledonia Showers	-7am - 12 pm -Capacity: for a few people in the shower	Is not a warming centre, people cannot freely spend time here, nor access other social services, it seems equivocal to include in terms of day time shelter spaces
Emergency Warming Centre	-Not a reliably open service. How would vulnerable populations know about Provincial and Federal weather warnings or the exact temperature? -Will this program expand to become a cooling centre? -Capacity: of 12	
WarmReach	-Not currently offered as a warming centre. It is a low barrier safe space and resource office with warm transfer and wrap around support . Minimal hours, only enough to cover gaps in the schedules of our unhoused	-At capacity -Tent access on weekends or outreach available



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	participants in the Warm Reach program: 6am-8am, 11am-2pm, 6pm-9p m. -Capacity: 15 people at a time -This program is not a walk-in service. The program is at capacity daily right now	
Total Programs	Total Services	Overall Accessibility
Total providers engaged/partnering in accessible indoor shelter space: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CMHA 2. 7/10 (City funded) 3. RISEBRIDGE Food, Drug Use and Hygiene services that are accessed indoors: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CMHA 2. Unitarian Church (City funded) 3. Salvation Army 	For reliable indoor daytime space: Total people able to access daytime indoor space in Nanaimo at one time: 49 individuals If weather permits: 61 individuals Weekends and Evenings (after 6pm-9pm): ONLY the WarmReach Program and only for 10 individuals at a time.	-Often at full capacity meaning there is a demand for more services

This table is inclusive of all daytime indoor services. This means that there is nowhere else these folx can access services and they do not align with overnight shelter times, so there are large gaps where folx have nothing. There is no reason to include overnight shelters on this list as these do not offer any day time accessibility. Nor would it make a significant difference to include outreach services in this table, not only because they do not provide shelter but because they would not increase the total hours that social services are available in the community.

Coordination with the outreach programs and services is one of the main reasons we are advocating for increased daytime drop in space. The excellent work being done by various groups and agencies need increased access to vulnerable populations. Warmreach was a centre that partnered with local outreach teams and encouraged coordination with other service providers. We continue to coordinate with outreach teams on WarmReach outreach



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events so we can facilitate even more crucial contact points with clients and those who need it. Without a physical, reliable low barrier resource access safe space that has the capacity to accept more people, outreach teams are missing crucial opportunities for connection and too many individuals are completely unable to access basic things like healthcare.

According to the 2020 PiT Count,

“The data shows that the minimum number of people facing homelessness in Nanaimo is 433, but likely the number is closer to 600; an increase of 29% since 2018 (335) and 149% since 2016 (174). Given the influence of COVID-19 restrictions around the time the count took place, there is reason to believe that the real number of people facing homelessness in Nanaimo was underrepresented.”

“The lack of available shelter beds has led to 61.9% of people facing homelessness being forced to sleep in places not intended for human habitation. The number of people sleeping on the streets is much higher in Nanaimo than in other Canadian communities; for example, Victoria’s 2020 PIT Count shows that only 18% of those counted were sleeping unsheltered.”

Here is a current time table (TABLE 2) of when individuals are able to access indoor space not including WarmReach Case Management Program participants (without being in the shower, injecting drugs or eating). The table includes the total number of persons able to seek shelter indoors during the day which includes unhoused individuals and other vulnerable populations.

For someone in the 38.1% (PiT 2020) of unhoused individuals who were able to stay in a shelter, then this table would account for their time spent outdoors: from the hours of 6:45 am - 6 pm or 7am-10 pm shelter dependent. Note: current shelters in community, although they will be changing soon, are 1.2-2.6 kilometres away from New Hope with a 54-45m incline. Caledonia to New Hope is 2.1 Kilometres. Otherwise, for the 61.9% (~371.4 individuals) of our unhoused community, these are the only times they would be resting inside at all. Note: not all individuals requiring these day time access spaces are unhoused so demand for these services is higher than just our unhoused populations.

TABLE 2



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	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
7-							
8-							
9-							
10		SC:15 WC:12	WC:12	WC:12	WC:12	SC:15 WC:12	
11		SC:15 WC:12	WC:12	WC:12	WC:12	SC:15 WC:12	
12		SC:15 WC:12	WC:12	SC:15 WC:12	WC:12	SC:15 WC:12	
13		SC:15 WC:12	WC:12	SC:15 WC:12	WC:12	SC:15 WC:12	
14		SC:15 WC:12	WC:12	SC:15 WC:12	WC:12	SC:15 WC:12	
15		SC:15 WC:12	WC:12	SC:15 WC:12	WC:12	SC:15 WC:12	
16		SC:15		SC:15		SC:15	
17				SC:15			
18				SC:15			
19							
20							
21							



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Legend: WC: Wallace Warming Centre, SC: Social Centre, Outside

Conclusion

There are significant gaps in offerings of daytime shelter space in Nanaimo. Most significantly, we only have indoor space for 62 individuals to shelter during the daytime on very cold days, 49 individuals most days, out of over 600 individuals. The greatest needs associated with accessing an indoor centre are; first-aid, warm transfer, outreach accessibility (coordination and partnerships with the existing services available in community), resource access and harm reduction. These needs are consistent with the findings of Nanaimo Action Plan to End Homelessness and the TiP 2020 Report. Both documents indicate that what is needed to respond to this crisis is a housing first approach, uptake of harm reduction strategies and to provide extra care in terms of significant transitions. Some of these findings are presented below.

“A large portion of survey respondents indicated they are facing medical, physical and/or mental health challenges. Homelessness has a direct impact on health, making it difficult or impossible to obtain medication and adhere to medical treatment.”

This lack of day-time shelter is first and foremost a public safety issue that needs immediate attention and action. It has been described as a community nuisance to see so many unhoused individuals on our streets, taking shelter in bus stops, or resting at tables in our fast food restaurants and coffee shops. But again, we severely lack options of support and shelter in the City of Nanaimo.

Recommendations

Firstly we recommend that the City fund Caledonia - the 7/10 centre to open everyday. We also recommend considering the necessities of beginning plans for transitioning to a cooling centre for the summer or just simply as a resource access centre and safe space for the short-term until other options via the SPO are made available. We offer our support for this project in collaborating for Outreach teams to provide services and support, training in harm reduction and EDI, and whatever else we can do if requested.

Secondly, we recommend the City fund the CMHA's warming centre to be open in the evening and earlier in the day. This would greatly increase overall access to services in the



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City at that time. Again, we would be honoured to support this project by offering our resources, connections and partnership. Knowing that CMHA may have staffing concerns, this would be a great opportunity for immediate community collaboration amongst existing organisations and outreach teams in the best interest of shared clients.

Thirdly, we propose that the City could fund and/or support the efforts of RISEBRIDGE, including WarmReach services and/or our Outreach tent that currently serves as a short-term solution for resource access. This tent service is being used to coordinate resources directly on the street and provide a safe place for people to connect with services on weekends which are critically under-served. We would also be willing to coordinate with

the City in other capacities, such as through funding for our indoor program, WarmReach Case Management which needs funding to continue into the spring. Ideally we would like to partner with the City and other existing social service providers and outreach teams to open a new warming centre in order to greatly increase capacity and access. This service will be strongly needed as a cooling centre soon. Broadly speaking, we strongly advocate for more indoor daytime spaces for shelter which is safer, more effective and the most reliable way to offer essential services, crucial connections and housing first strategies. We would also like to continue extending the opportunity to support the work of Bylaw enforcement and assist with the current policies and procedures to act in a more responsible and trauma informed way. This would benefit community, bylaw and the vulnerable individuals in major ways. We are proposing that Bylaw connect with us, and/or other organisations and outreach teams prior to moving unhoused individuals and throwing away personal belongings.

Notably, as shown in TABLE, there is not a diversity of service providers for day time services which impacts overall accessibility of services as well as the range of those services offered. This could be improved by the City engaging more service providers either through funding and/or coordination of services and projects.

We ask that the leaders representing the City of Nanaimo address the violence and danger faced by unhoused and street-entrenched individuals. This list includes immediate cessation of traumatising disbursement policies, training for bylaw, enforcement of existing City policies and improved accountability.

1. Calls related to unhoused or camping individuals are classified as “security” when it ought to be treated as a safety concern for that individual.
2. Disbursement policies are dangerous, violent and traumatising.
From a trauma-informed perspective, dealing with institutions and systems can be retraumatizing. We know that disbursement techniques, “moving people along”, are experienced as harassment, disrespect, humiliation, being lied to, and theft. Removal of people’s belongings especially without aid of support workers or advocates and



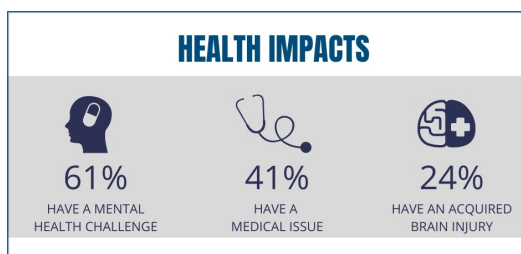
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even the practice of language that is disempowering - these types of practises, especially when coordinating with police, is having a very damaging effect on the health, access, human rights and dignity of vulnerable populations. The way that Bylaw engages with vulnerable populations can and must change right away.

3. Evictions and Sweeps must include social services and support workers, not just COR and RCMP.
4. Evictions/ interactions must be done in a trauma-informed way. We know from the 2020 PiT report that unhoused people have a high percentage of health needs, challenges and trauma.



5. Must abide by provincial supreme court ruling and not harass people after sun down or before 9 am for legal camping.
6. Must develop ways to improve the safety of camping access. Currently, camping within reasonable distance from services is extremely limited. Furthermore, forcing people to camp in increasingly hidden places is very dangerous for them. People, especially those who camp in Bowen, experience; violence, assaults, theft and harassment from local vigilante groups and, allegedly, Bylaw Enforcement and RCMP. It is the City's responsibility to indicate where camping is allowed, yet all that is accessible is lists and lists of where people cannot stay, and even in those places, bylaw is not consistent (example: disbursement before 9 am).

We offer to support the City's efforts by coordinating with other social service providers and support workers to educate and assist the bylaw with evictions, sweeps and other types of disbursement. We could also facilitate EDI training, including trauma-informed practises for BYlaw enforcement and the clean up team, as well as any city officials seeking to improve interactions and coordination with our vulnerable populations.

We wish to share directly from a marginalised perspective, because their experience and knowledge can help us all improve our community relations. Although it is important to acknowledge where there is success, there is much room for expansion and improvement. We must centre these experiences and value them as knowledge in kind with reports.



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The level of vigilante attacks on our unhoused individuals this year is a great safety concern that demands swift response and prevention efforts.

It's not ethical or responsible to continue to exist without basic resource access opportunities and shelter spaces which provide essential supports that can aid in the ongoing emergency crisis within our community that continues to get worse everyday.

In response to what Bill Corsan, City Director of Corporate and Business development, said in the most recent article on Nanaimo News now, we may be a newer non-profit in Nanaimo, but our team members' have spent years of their lives serving on the front lines of social service, health care and social justice work for our community. We invite Mr. Corsan and other City employees to meet with our organisation and team if they wish to know about our experience and successes. It is not a consensus in the community that the existing non-profit landscape works very well together, and has good working relationships.

The harm of mistruths, performative rhetoric, and INACTION on this matter far outweighs the discomfort needed to make necessary changes for our community immediately.

References

Nanaimo PiT Report (2020)

<https://nanaimohomelesscoalition.ca/how-to-end-homelessness-in-nanaimo-2/>