

FOR: PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

MEETING DATE: April 8, 2026

DEPARTMENT: COMMUNITY SERVICES

SUBJECT: **THE HUB UPDATE**

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report

To provide the Public Safety Committee with an update on the Hub service.

BACKGROUND

Since opening on 2025-JAN-02, the Hub, located at 55 Victoria Road with an entrance off Nicol Street, has provided coordinated daytime and overnight services for individuals experiencing homelessness. Daytime services were delivered by Island Crisis Care Society (ICCS) from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., offering access to basic needs, health-related supports, housing intake and triage, and connections to housing. Overnight shelter services operated from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. and have been delivered by Nanaimo Family Life Association (NFLA).

Daytime operations were jointly funded by the City of Nanaimo and the federally funded Reaching Home Program, while overnight shelter services were funded by BC Housing through its temporary shelter program.

The Hub was located within a building that has long housed multiple co-located medical support services, including programs providing health care, and addiction supports. As a result, the surrounding area had an established pattern of service use and congregation with people with complex needs prior to the Hub opening.

On 2025-JUL-16, Staff presented an operational update on the Hub to the Finance and Audit Committee, outlining service demand, system coordination, neighbourhood impacts, and mitigation measures. While the Hub's role in Nanaimo's homelessness response was acknowledged, residents and businesses raised concerns related to visible homelessness and associated behaviours. These concerns reflected a shift in the location of longstanding congregation of people with complex needs from the Victoria Road side of the building to the Nicol Street side, a busy highway corridor with higher pedestrian and vehicle volumes. This shift increased the visibility of existing activity and introduced additional traffic safety considerations. The Hub location was selected following a nine-month site search and enabled people already accessing nearby health services, as well as individuals not traditionally connected to supports, to access coordinated health and social services, including shelter and housing options, in an indoor setting.

Following the Finance and Audit Committee meeting, Council passed the following motion at the 2025-JUL-21 Regular Council Meeting:

That Council:

1. *Allocate \$125,000 from funding designated to support homelessness initiatives in the Special Initiatives Reserve to extend the existing service agreement with United Way BC and fund daytime operations at the Hub until March 31, 2026, to maintain service levels over the 2025/2026 winter season;*
2. *Direct Staff to work with Hub service providers and United Way BC to identify and secure a more suitable location for the Hub, including shower services; and*
3. *Direct Staff to report back to the Finance and Audit Committee in fall 2025 with an update on alternate funding or service delivery models.*

As directed by Council, Staff worked closely with Hub service providers to identify and assess potential alternate locations. These efforts have included landlord outreach, site visits, and evaluation of both leased and potential purchase opportunities. Despite these efforts, no suitable alternative location has been identified due to limited availability of appropriate spaces, landlord hesitancy, operational constraints, geographic accessibility issues, and a lack of funding for property acquisition or major renovations.

To advance coordination and planning, a working group was established under the Alignment Project, a provincial and federal initiative intended to improve governance, service coordination, and data systems related to homelessness. The working group has brought together health and social service providers, housing partners, Indigenous organizations, and City Staff to assess both short- and long-term options to maintain indoor space and coordinated services for people experiencing homelessness.

At the 2026-JAN-19 Regular Council Meeting, Council passed a further motion directing that:

The Mayor and Council write to the Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs requesting a meeting to discuss the urgent need for funding for a daytime drop-in homelessness resource hub, as well as other housing-related priorities.

At the same meeting, Council also approved the following recommendation:

That Council direct Staff to provide regular updates on the Hub to the Public Safety Committee.

This report responds to that direction and provides a final update on Hub operations. As previously reported, due to funding limitations and the absence of a suitable alternate location, the Hub closed on 2026-MAR-29, and all daytime and overnight services at the current site have ceased.]

DISCUSSION

When operational, the Hub functioned as system-critical infrastructure within Nanaimo's coordinated homelessness, housing, and public health response. Cumulative service data collected between 2025-JAN-02 and 2026-FEB-28 demonstrates both the scale and intensity of need addressed through the Hub:

- Over 35,000 daytime visits since opening.
- An average of 82 unique individuals accessing daytime services daily with demand increasing during periods of inclement weather to approximately 130 to 140 unique individuals per day.
- Nearly 400 unique individuals supported through overnight shelter services.

- More than 1,600 shelter turnaways recorded over the duration of shelter operations, reflecting sustained capacity pressures.
- In July 2025, a By-Names List (BNL) of 170 individuals was established, supported by housing assessment and applications. As of 2026-MAR-20, 54 individuals have been housed and removed from the BNL, with housing pathways largely developed through Hub engagement.

The Hub was foundational to the operation of the BNL and Nanaimo's coordinated access system. Daily, low-barrier engagement enabled service providers to identify new individuals experiencing homelessness, update acuity assessments, and triage people from shelter into HEARTH temporary supportive housing, permanent supportive housing, and private market accommodations.

The Hub also served as a primary access point for Island Health outreach teams, BC Housing outreach staff, the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction's Community Integration Services team, Snuneymuxw First Nation, and other service providers. These partners relied on the Hub as a consistent, centralized location to complete housing registry intakes, maintain continuity of health care, and deliver a range of social support services.

The Hub's closure coincided with the seasonal drawdown of winter shelter services, resulting in the loss of 104 shelter beds system-wide, including 20 at the Hub, and the elimination of a critical daytime stabilization and food access space. These reductions constrain housing intake and triage capacity at a time of declining shelter availability, and simultaneous reductions in outreach-based food security services, further limiting access to basic need supports. Beginning in 2026, new provincial witnessed dosing requirements increased vulnerability, as individuals continue to attend the area for medical appointments without access to a safe indoor space, intensifying pressure on both clients and the surrounding area.

ICCS has been awarded \$800,000 through the federal Reaching Home program for the period of 2026-APR-01 to 2028-MAR-31, to operate the Hub should a new location be secured. In summer 2025, the City also applied for Emergency Treatment Fund through Health Canada to support renovation costs should the Hub be relocated to another site; however, the application was unsuccessful due to the absence of a confirmed, secure location at the time of submission.

Work is ongoing to identify and secure a suitable replacement location. Continued advocacy is being advanced through the working group to the Province to obtain adequate capital funding to support renovations and/or the purchase of a new facility, as well as operational funding from BC Housing to enable shelter services. Should a new location be secured, Staff will return with an update to Mayor and Council.

COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In preparation for the Hub's closure, Staff worked closely with Hub service providers, community partners, and public safety agencies to assess anticipated impacts, coordinate system responses, and support clear and consistent communication. Planning activities were undertaken with the understanding that no replacement Hub location, services, or resources had been confirmed, and that demand for services in the surrounding area was expected to increase following closure, particularly for individuals reliant on nearby health services and supports.

Two targeted community meetings were held to support advance communication and coordination. A dedicated meeting was held on 2026-JAN-20 with Hub service providers, outreach organizations, and

public safety agencies focused on anticipated impacts to service delivery, coordinated access, public safety, and system pressures, with an emphasis on operational readiness, continuity of care, and information-sharing across organizations. A separate community information session was held on 2026-FEB-12 with downtown businesses, service providers operating in or serving the area, residents, and representatives from neighbourhood associations. This meeting provided advance notice of the Hub's closure, outlined anticipated impacts, and clarified which services would remain available following closure. The session was structured as information-sharing only, recognizing that no new Hub location or replacement services had been confirmed at that time. A follow-up meeting with downtown businesses and representatives from Neighbourhood Associations is planned for late April 2026 to gather observations following the closure.

In parallel with these engagement efforts, Staff are coordinating with internal City departments and external partners to ensure ongoing mitigation supports remain in place in the downtown and south-end areas following the Hub's closure, including continued deployment of enhanced Clean Team services, multiple daily patrols by the Community Safety Officer team, and ongoing RCMP engagement through existing initiatives. These measures are intended to help manage impacts and support community safety; however, the City has limited authority, resources, and capacity to address issues that fall primarily within provincial jurisdiction, including health care, addictions treatment, complex care, and shelter service provision. As such, these mitigation efforts do not replace the loss of indoor stabilization, shelter capacity, or coordinated service functions previously provided through the Hub.

ALIGNMENT WITH CITY PLAN

The report is aligned with the following City goals:

- A Healthy Nanaimo: Community Wellbeing and Livability
 - C3.1 Community Safety & Security
 - C3.2 Affordable Housing
 - C3.4 Food Security
 - C3.6 Recreation, Culture, & Well
- An Empowered Nanaimo: Reconciliation, Representation and Inclusion
 - C4.2 Equity & Inclusivity
 - C4.3 Access for All

ALIGNMENT WITH COUNCIL'S STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The report is aligned with the following Council Strategic Framework priorities:

- Implementing City Plan Action Plans and Key City Management Plans
- Social, Health and Public Safety Challenges
- Communicating with the Community

KEY MESSAGES

- The Hub closed on 2026-MAR-29, with no replacement location secured at this time.
- Since opening, the Hub has served as system-critical infrastructure, supporting tens of thousands of visits, hundreds of individuals, and dozens of successful housing placements.
- The Hub's closure coincides with a significant seasonal reduction in shelter and basic-needs capacity, creating compounding impacts for individuals, service providers, and the downtown public realm.
- Staff and community partners continue to coordinate mitigation efforts and community communication despite limited resources and capacity, while Council advocates to senior governments in recognition that many system impacts extend beyond municipal jurisdiction.

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