



Homelessness in Abbotsford **ACTION PLAN**

Prepared by:

Council's Task Force on Homelessness

October 2014

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	3
Introduction	6
Strategic Direction 1: Facilitate a housing first approach, rather than housing only.....	9
Strategic Direction 2: Advocate for housing and wrap-around support	11
Strategic Direction 3: Initiate a prevention program	16
Strategic Direction 4: Promote a culture of awareness, inclusiveness and respect	20
Strategic Direction 5: Foster collaboration between agencies, community and government.....	22
Implementation	24
Timeline and Process	25
Conclusions	27
Terms	28

Appendices

Published as a separate document and include:

- Abbotsford Homelessness Task Force Terms of Reference
- Minutes of Task Force and Council Reports
- Summary Report - 2014 Homelessness Count and Homelessness Surveys
- Mapping of Key Challenges
- Links to Key Documents



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Executive Summary

Housing is the cornerstone of any community, providing shelter for households, establishing a foundation for realizing peoples' potential, and enabling their participation in society and the economy. Planning for and anticipating future requirements can help better address Abbotsford's needs as they evolve over time and help to reduce the risk of homelessness in our community.

Abbotsford City Council's Task Force on Homelessness has developed a plan with the goal of ensuring that everyone in Abbotsford has a home. While the importance of having emergency supports in place for people who have become homeless is understood, the focus of this plan is to also create conditions that prevent homelessness and quickly support those who have become homeless to again have a home.

In order to achieve this intention, the Task Force on Homelessness developed five strategic directions to guide the Homelessness Action Plan. With these strategic directions and principles in mind, the Task Force further developed recommended priority actions under each strategic direction.

It is understood that the City of Abbotsford may not necessarily be the organization that takes the lead on the implementation of all of these actions, but that the City will work with BC Housing, Fraser Health Authority and service provider organizations to ensure each of these recommendations is addressed.

1. Facilitate a Housing First Approach

1.1 Promote partnerships with organizations to provide more housing across the spectrum by hiring an experienced Housing and Homelessness Coordinator to implement the Homelessness Action Plan

Abbotsford City Council should immediately create a staff coordinator position responsible for the implementation of the recommendations of the Task Force on Homelessness, including the implementation of community based one-stop Housing First system for the purpose of better coordination of housing and support for vulnerable residents. The coordinator would be the City's staff representative at the Homelessness and Housing Advisory Committee (see point 5.1). The coordinator should be tasked with liaising with all government agencies, seeking funding (Federal, Provincial, Local, etc.), liaising with all other non-profit agencies, First Nations, non-profit agencies and other government agencies and offices, including Parole and Employment Assistance.

1.2 Initiate the development of a procurement plan for housing across the spectrum

Within the City of Abbotsford there are a range of housing options with needs identified in each category. For the purpose of this Action Plan, the idea of housing spectrum respects the reality that people do not always move through the continuum and that a 'Housing First' approach requires opportunities to enter housing or to be 'rehoused' at the most appropriate point. The City will work with government agencies and community organization to support development of housing across the spectrum.

2. Advocate for housing and wrap-around support

2.1 Lobby for an Assertive Community Treatment Team (ACT)

The City of Abbotsford should work closely with Fraser Health Authority and the Provincial government to implement an ACT team, serving the central Fraser Valley region.

2.2 Foster the concept of Wrap-Around Support

The City of Abbotsford should continue to work closely with Fraser Health Authority and the Provincial government to provide improved comprehensive and coordinated support for homeless and those at risk of homelessness both BEFORE and AFTER they are housed.

3. Initiate a Prevention Program

3.1 Initiate a Training and Prevention Program

The City of Abbotsford should continue to work closely with non-profit agencies, the University of the Fraser Valley and School District to consider both training and homelessness prevention programs, including research and evaluation of all proposed initiatives.

3.2 Enhance the Application Process for Recovery Homes

The City of Abbotsford should institute processes to ensure that consideration of Recovery Home applications for established proven operators be fast-tracked.

3.3 Advocate for Discharge Practices that Support Prevention of Homelessness

Abbotsford City Council should advocate for the establishment of provincial and federal systems that prevent practices of discharging into homelessness.

3.4 Adopt Policies to support Scattered Site and Small Housing Programs

The City of Abbotsford should support the development of scattered site and small housing programs.

3.5 Continue to Implement Affordable Housing Strategy

The City of Abbotsford should continue implementation of the 2011 Affordable Housing Strategy and integrate with other city plans and bylaws to provide the social lens to all City efforts in order to enhance the supply of housing across the housing spectrum.

3.6 Support Improved Food Security

Abbotsford City Council, in partnership with other relevant organizations, should support improved health and welfare through the implementation of food security programs with an important focus on families living in poverty.



4. Create a culture of awareness, inclusiveness and respect

4.1 Promote a culture of awareness

Abbotsford City Council, in partnership with other relevant organizations, should institute a community education and awareness program, which could include training and technical assistance and other events to help solidify core values and principles of the Housing First Model.

4.2 Initiate a Dialogue on Community Engagement and Volunteerism

Abbotsford City Council, in partnership with other relevant organizations, should initiate a Community Campaign related to implementation of this Action Plan, as well as a community based employment initiative for those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

5. Foster collaboration between agencies, community and government

5.1 Establish a Housing and Homelessness Advisory Committee

Abbotsford City Council should immediately establish a standing Committee of Council comprised of stakeholder agencies (similar in composition to the Homelessness Task Force) to continue the work of the Task Force. The committee would act to advise Council on the issue of Homelessness going forward.

5.2 Establish a Housing First Centre

Abbotsford City Council should establish a Housing First centre that will act as a hub where organizations can connect over funding and research related to housing and support for persons who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

The end of homelessness is a collective effort that requires partnerships with all levels of government as well as with the private, non-profit, faith-based, education and research organizations and countless volunteers, including those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The Task Force believes the implementation of these recommended Strategic Directions and priority actions by the City of Abbotsford will positively affect housing and service outcomes across the housing spectrum for vulnerable citizens in Abbotsford.

Introduction

On March 20, 2014, Abbotsford City Council announced the formation of a Task Force on Homelessness. Council directed the Task Force to work closely with all levels of the community to design and initiate a comprehensive, community-wide homelessness response plan. Further, the Task Force was to examine not only the conditions and responses to homelessness that exist within the City of Abbotsford, but draft a plan to address the steps needed to meet the requirements of the community going forward.

Task Force Members:

- Jim Burkinshaw, Volunteer Coordinator, Abbotsford Christian Leadership Network
- Joyce McElhoes, Director, Cyrus Centre
- Keir Macdonald, Operations Manager, Lower Mainland Non Profit with BC Housing
- Stan Kuperis, Director of Clinical Programs Mental Health and Substance Use, Fraser Health Authority
- Dr. Lawrence Loh, Medical Health Officer, Fraser Health Authority
- Karen Matty, President, Matsqui Developments Co. Ltd.
- Ross Seimens, Owner, Hub Motor Services
- Bob Rich, Chief Constable, Abbotsford Police Department
- Patricia Ross, Councillor, City of Abbotsford
- John Smith, Councillor, City of Abbotsford
- Dr. Ron van Wyk, Associate Executive Director, Mennonite Central Committee
- Mike Welte, President of the Abbotsford Chamber of Commerce
- Cherie Enns, Associate Professor, University of the Fraser Valley and Task Force Coordinator
- Jake Rudolph, Deputy City Manager and Task Force Staff Liaison

The draft Homelessness Action Plan is based on the following principles:

- A Housing First approach;
- Individualized advocacy and outreach efforts;
- Coordination and collaboration with all stakeholders;
- Actions and strategies based on on-going evidenced research.

The intention of the following Abbotsford Homelessness Action Plan is to: Initiate a comprehensive community-wide 'Housing First' approach as a strategy for ending and preventing circumstances of chronic homelessness in Abbotsford by working collaboratively with key stakeholders to provide and sustain immediate housing opportunities; with supporting agencies following-up with participants to promote recovery and well being.



In order to achieve this intention, the Task Force on Homelessness developed five strategic directions to guide the Homelessness Action Plan. The strategic directions include:

1. Facilitate a Housing First approach, rather than housing only;
2. Advocate for housing and wrap-around support;
3. Initiate a prevention program;
4. Create a culture of awareness, inclusiveness and respect; and
5. Foster collaboration between agencies, community and government.

Each of the strategic directions are described in detail and aligned with actions, outcomes and proposed partner opportunities. The final section of the Homelessness Action Plan presents a draft implementation strategy over three years, including priority actions and recommendations.

The strategic directions are based on research and analysis, including information drawn from the FVRD's *Draft 2014 Homelessness Survey¹ Abbotsford Summary Report*, which was completed for the Fraser Valley Regional District (FVRD) by the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC). March 2014 approximately 150 people were identified as homeless, and while there was a higher number in 2009 this number represents an increase of 29% since 2011². Therefore, the strategic directions reflect important community based research as well as several months of work by Task Force members, who received information and presentations at meetings from delegations, and who participated in community association tours.

Priority actions and recommendations are also based on an analysis of inventories, as well as the data provided by participating agencies including BC Housing, Fraser Health and Service Providers, including a Homelessness Survey completed for Abbotsford Community Services.

In addition, a background report has been prepared with summary material and information including:

- Abbotsford Homelessness Task Force Terms of Reference
- Minutes of Task Force and Council Reports
- Summary Report - 2014 Homelessness Count and Homelessness Surveys
- Mapping of Key Challenges
- Links to Key Documents

This Action Plan is not intended to be a comprehensive report on affordable housing or homelessness; rather, it builds on other important research and strategic documents as a blueprint for future community-wide based action. Please consult the list of references and links to key reports and studies on the final page of this document.

Through the implementation of each strategic direction and priority action the intent of the Task Force is that these actions will positively affect housing and service outcomes across the housing spectrum for vulnerable citizens in Abbotsford.

¹ Ron van Wyk, D. Phil and Anita van Wyk, PhD, (2014) *2014 Fraser Valley District Homelessness Survey: Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations*, Mennonite Central Committee, Abbotsford. Please note this draft summary was submitted to assist with task force process and has not as yet been reviewed by the Fraser Valley Regional District Board.

² Homeless persons are defined for the purpose of the 2014 Homelessness Count and Survey as persons with no fixed address, with no regular and/or adequate nighttime residence where they can expect to stay more than 30 days.

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PROPOSED 3 TO 5 YEAR HOMELESSNESS ACTION PLAN

Initiate a comprehensive community-wide 'Housing First' approach as a strategy for ending and preventing circumstances of chronic homelessness in Abbotsford by working collaboratively with key stakeholders to provide and sustain immediate housing opportunities with supporting agencies following-up with participants to promote recovery and well being.

FIVE STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

Direction
1



Facilitate housing first, but not housing only;

Direction
2



Advocate for housing and wrap-around support;

Direction
3



Initiate a prevention program;

Direction
4



Create a culture of inclusiveness and respect;

Direction
5



**Foster collaboration between agencies,
community and government.**

Strategic Direction 1: Facilitate a Housing First Approach

It is imperative that the City of Abbotsford adopt the philosophy of 'Housing First' vs. housing only in its effort to end homelessness in the community. "Housing First' is a solid evidence based practice that promotes immediate access to housing with no housing readiness requirements, consumer choice and self-determination enabled through the provision of rent supplements, individualized client-driven oriented supports and provision of housing across the housing spectrum"³. The FVRD's *Draft 2014 Homeless Survey Abbotsford Summary Report* indicates that 50-60 units of additional housing on the basis of the Housing First approach would alleviate housing needs for those who live with mental illness and/or addiction to substance use; including transition (second-stage) housing for those coming out of treatment and those released from incarceration.

Priority Action 1.1

Promote partnerships with organizations to provide more housing across the spectrum by hiring an experienced Housing and Homelessness Coordinator to implement the Homelessness Action Plan with an immediate focus on initiating the following solutions:

- Source funding and partners related to development of at least 50-60 housing units, including low barrier options.
- Source funding and partners related to further establishment and/or support of mental health and addictions facilities in Abbotsford, with a minimum of 50 beds.

Desired Outcomes

- A procurement strategy for development of housing across the housing spectrum including 50-60 units of low barrier housing referenced above over the next 3 years.
- Advocate for Housing First model.
- Work with community agencies and all levels of government to implementation on the Abbotsford Homelessness Action Plan.

Priority Action 1.2

Initiate the development of a procurement plan for housing across the spectrum in order to address BC Housing waitlists⁴ and future needs of both homeless and those at-risk of homelessness. The City of Abbotsford currently or has received support from BC Housing and other government and non-profit sources along the housing continuum including support in most of the following categories:

- Emergency shelter,
- Transitional, supportive and assisted living;
- Independent social housing;

³ Adapted from <http://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/HousingFirstInCanada.pdf>

⁴There are currently approximately 161 households on BC Housing waitlist.

- Rent assistance in the private market;
- Private market housing (i.e. micro suites); and
- Home ownership (i.e. such as projects like Harmony Flex Housing).

Within the City of Abbotsford there are a range of housing options with needs identified in each category. For the purpose of this Action Plan the idea of housing spectrum is proposed as this respects the reality that people do not always move through the continuum and that a 'Housing First' approach requires opportunities to enter housing or to be 're-housed' at the most appropriate point.

- Optimize the city's use of resources, access to grants and other resources including the Affordable Housing Fund to leverage and support housing partnerships; and, advocate for increased provincial funding including per diems for housing and services to address homelessness by responding to housing needs across the spectrum as illustrated in the diagram on page 14.
- Work with local agencies to facilitate low-barrier 24-7 shelter services in addition to the Centre of Hope Emergency Shelter for vulnerable groups (youth, women, urban aboriginal people); and, reduce the long-term dependency on the use of emergency shelter services.

Desired Outcomes

- A procurement strategy for development of housing across the housing spectrum including 50-60 units of low barrier housing over the next 3 years.
- Continue to ensure that there are sufficient units of housing – including permanent supportive housing – so that people who are homeless have a place to go.
- More scattered housing sites.
- No one lives outside for more than 7 days.
- No one leaves the shelter to return to the street.
- Reduced number of nights per person in a shelter.
- Mobile Outreach Bus including primary health care and personal services such as showers.

Potential Partners

BC Housing (rent subsidies and design-build project financing), Fraser Health, non-profit partners, financial institutions, community partners and Federal Homelessness Partnering Initiative, organizations providing outreach services including Centre of Hope (Salvation Army); Cyrus Centre, 5 & 2 Ministries and Fraser Health (support for ACT Team), rent and shelter subsidies (BC Housing); Aboriginal Health and all other service providers and agencies.

Impact Areas

Across the housing spectrum.



Strategic Direction 2: Advocate for Housing and Wrap-around Support

According to the FVRD's 2014 Homeless Survey, Summary Report, the existing support system for those who are most vulnerable in relation to homelessness is inadequate. This observation is also made in a recent survey of homeless prepared by Abbotsford Community Services.

"Welfare and disability benefits are the source of income for 39% of the homeless persons. In addition to a paradigm shift in the delivery of mental health care, it is also necessary to provide more than surface support, such as food, clothing, emergency shelter, soup kitchens, etc. High-need clients, such as those living with concurrent disorders and who are chronically homeless, require a full integration of mental health and addiction services in addition to health care and housing. Evidence suggests that the current system of care picks and chooses instead of offering the whole set of services needed, so clients with the most complex needs get no care and drop out of the system. This reality aggravates the problem of inadequate care for those who live homeless"⁵.

Priority Action 2.1

Lobby for an Assertive Community Treatment Team (ACT): Abbotsford City Council should work closely with Fraser Health Authority and Provincial government to implement an ACT team, serving the central Fraser Valley region (Abbotsford and Mission).

- Advocate for funding related to range of community based outreach services including rapid Rehousing; and, follow-through with the application to Fraser Health related to ACT team.
- Facilitate the coordination of outreach services within Abbotsford through monthly meetings and regular communication.

Desired Outcomes

- Implementation and coordination of ACT - client-centered, recovery-oriented outreach mental health services.
- Foster a philosophy of empathetic and therapeutic care.

Potential Partners

Fraser Health and social service agencies providing mental health, substance abuse treatment and range of outreach services.

Requirements

Outreach including services to facilitate rapid rehousing related to housing across the housing spectrum.

⁵ 2014 Homelessness Count Draft Summary Report (MCC and FVRD)

Priority Action 2.2

Foster the concept of Wrap-Around Support: The City of Abbotsford should continue to work closely with Fraser Health Authority and the Provincial government to encourage improved comprehensive and coordinated support for homeless and those at-risk of homelessness both BEFORE and AFTER they are housed. Collaboration on planning wrap-around services for homeless individuals and families as needed to stabilize their lives then continue with support that may be required long-term.

- Coordinate and strengthen the provision of outreach services to facilitate access to housing, including access to social assistance, applications for housing through a City-initiated community based centralized in-take and support of clients across the housing spectrum; and support private landlords housing 'at-risk' tenants.
- Initiate community based employment programs for those who are homeless and/or in institutions such as 'Just Work'.
- Hire/sub-contract a city based homelessness advocate.
- Work with partners to improve information and services for renters/tenants.
- Partner with health care workers to provide access to important services for those who are homelessness and/or at risk of homelessness.

Desired Outcomes

- Organizations work together to assist homeless and vulnerable residents.
- On-going support until resident is stable.
- Housing and support workers rapidly respond together as soon as an individual or family becomes homeless.
- Lease agreements and protocol for private landlords are developed.
- Wider reach of information (e.g. standards of maintenance, hoarding and potential funding.)
- Place a strong emphasis on diversion from emergency resources.
- Coordinated institutional discharge programs.
- Streamlined social assistance, identification and rental subsidy processes.
- Coordinate outreach and document outcomes.
- Continue with the provision of outreach services to facilitate access to housing.
- Develop an institution discharge protocol for the region.
- Wider reach of information (e.g. standards of maintenance, hoarding.)

Potential Partners

BC Housing, Fraser Health, BC Residential Tenancy Branch, non-profit partners, financial institutions, community partners, all outreach service agencies, Centre of Hope (Salvation Army), support for ACT Team, rent subsidies (BC Housing); Elizabeth Fry, MCC, John Howard Society, local businesses, faith-based partners, First Nations & Urban Aboriginal partners, landlords, Federal Homelessness Partnering program.

Impact Areas

Important for residents living in housing across the spectrum.



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THE HOUSING SPECTRUM

A Consideration of Future Needs

NON-MARKET TEMPORARY



Emergency Shelter

Existing Options

Williams Booth
Salvation Army
Extreme Weather Program

Need

Extended length of stay proposed
Inclusion of Pets



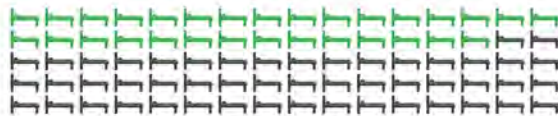
Transitional Housing/ Second Stage

Existing Options

Supportive Recovery Houses (not at capacity)
Ravens Moon
Small House Model
Elizabeth Fry
King Haven

Need

More low barrier transitional housing options
30 Beds (including beds for youth)
50 Mental health beds



NON-MARKET PERMANENT



Supportive Housing

Existing Options

Woman's Resource Society
Christine Lamb
Kinghaven
George Schmidt
Menno Home
Raven's Moon

Need

Low Barrier
Supportive Housing
(50-60 Units)



Non-Market Rental Housing

Existing Options

Social housing
(over 100 person wait list)
Co-op housing
(soon to lose subsidy)
Harmony flex
Housing rental units
Other subsidized rental
housing options

Need

Program to assist with
co-op housing
transition and more
rental units for
families, elderly,
youth and disabled
(50-80 Units)



MARKET PERMANENT



Market Rental Housing

Existing Options

Rental subsidies
Social assistance
Rental bank
Scattered site housing
(ie Ravenmoon)
Microsuites

Need

Implementation of
City of Abbotsford
Affordable Housing
Strategy



Home Ownership

Existing Options

Flex housing
Work-live suites
Mortgage helpers
Lane housing
Additional ownership
models

Need

Implementation of
City of Abbotsford
Affordable Housing
Strategy



Strategic Direction 3: Initiate a Prevention Program

According to Statistics Canada's 2011 National Household Survey, at least 3,700 rental households making less than \$30,000 a year are paying more than 30% of income on shelter and are potentially at risk of homelessness. Furthermore, the 2014 increase in youth homelessness rates⁶, the impending end to co-op housing subsidies, the over 3,000 people in Abbotsford on social assistance or other forms of income support and the increased use of food bank and other meal programs, by all vulnerable groups including families with children, all suggest that it is very important to facilitate a comprehensive, prevention and awareness program.

Priority Action 3.1

Initiate a Training and Prevention Program: Work closely with non-profit agencies, University of the Fraser Valley and School District to initiate homelessness prevention programs, including research and evaluation of all proposed initiatives.

Desired Outcomes

- University Courses, Internships and Practicums focusing on Action Plan Implementation.
- K to 12 Curriculum (for example Socials 12 Course).
- Community forums and education opportunities related to Action Plan implementation.
- Foster a philosophy of understanding.

Potential Partners

School Districts, University of the Fraser Valley, BC Housing, Abbotsford Community Services, and financial institutions.

Priority Action 3.2

Enhance the Application Process for Recovery Homes:

- Revise the present application process to ensure that consideration of Recovery Home applications for established proven operators be fast-tracked.

Desired Outcomes

- Quicker process for established operations offering Housing First response to people interested in recovery.

Potential Partners

Supportive recovery operators, funding agencies and government agencies.

⁶Cyrus Centre sheltered over 200 youth at some point last year. MCFD indicates there are at least 30 youth on youth or independent agreements.

Impact Areas

- Shelters
- Supportive Housing
- Recovery Options

Priority Action 3.3

Develop approaches to prevent provincial and federal systems from discharging into homelessness:

- Work with all levels of government to end the process of discharging people into homelessness from public health, justice and child welfare systems.
- Advocate for systems improvements, including assistance to gain identification and access funding, housing and programs to prevent homelessness.

Desired Outcomes

- Lower recidivism rates
- Improved Institutional discharge systems
- Local employment programs

Potential Partners

- Social service agencies, private landlords and faith-groups, police, the University of the Fraser Valley, industry, landowners, K-12 education systems, Elizabeth Fry Society, John Howard, local businesses, criminal justice systems.

Impact Areas

- Housing across the spectrum and institutional discharge systems.

Priority Action 3.4

Encourage private landlords and other scattered site small housing programs.

- Partner with landlords and service providers to facilitate offering of housing throughout the community.
- Local Rent Bank with mechanism for grants and loan repayment. Pursue funding collaboration and development.

Desired Outcomes

- Housing in new locations including existing under utilized city structures.
- Strengthening of scattered housing strategies.
- Further development of the existing rental bank to support those 'at-risk' of being homeless and improve housing stability.
- Prevention of evictions due to short-term financial crisis.

Potential Partners

BC Housing, Abbotsford Community Services, Raven's Moon, MCC, City of Abbotsford, BC Residential Tenancy Branch, service agencies, financial institutions, community partners, Abbotsford Foundation, non-profit partners.

Requirements

- Low Barrier Housing
- Supportive Housing
- Social Housing
- Purpose Built Rental
- Private Housing

Priority Action 3.5

Continued implementation of the 2011 City of Abbotsford's Affordable Housing Strategy and integrate with other city plans and bylaws to provide the social lens to all City efforts in order to enhance the supply of housing across the housing spectrum.

- Expand and amend planning and regulatory framework to expedite and enhance supply of affordable housing units, including a scattered site neighbourhood approach.
- Expand zones/ housing types for secondary suites and laneway housing, micro suites, supportive recovery and flex-housing.
- Work with partners to improve information and services for renters/tenants.
- Create good neighbour policies, bylaws and other initiatives related to protection of all residents.

Desired Outcomes

- Fully implement the City of Abbotsford Affordable Housing Plan as an important step to ensuring housing needs can be addressed.
- Processes in place to support lower rent housing/co-op housing.
- Include integrated neighbourhoods with varied housing forms and costs in development plans.
- Wider reach of information and better communication around land use changes and other affordable housing initiatives.

Potential Partners

BC Housing, development community, Habitat for Humanity, all residents and community organizations and businesses.

Requirements

- Across the Housing Spectrum
- Market Rental and Ownership Housing

Priority Action 3.6

Improve health through better quality food security with an important focus on families living in poverty.

- Work with partners to establish standards for food provision/nutrition in shelters & supportive housing.
- Initiate a community garden program for vulnerable residents, including volunteer gardeners.

Desired Outcomes

- Improved food security, health and stability for all residents.

Potential Partners

Food Bank, BC Housing, non-profit & community partners, School District – lunch/breakfast programs, community schools and residents.

Impact Areas

- Shelters
- Supportive Housing
- Private Households
- All Housing

Strategic Direction 4: Promote a Culture of Awareness, Inclusiveness and Respect

This direction is founded upon the vision that Abbotsford is community where everyone has a home and is treated with dignity and respect; citizens possess a shared understanding and insight as to needs of the most vulnerable in the community.

Priority Action 4.1

Promote a culture of awareness: Abbotsford City Council, in partnership with other relevant organizations, should institute a community education and awareness program, which could include training and technical assistance and other events to help solidify core values and principles of the Housing First Model.

- Create a Council-endorsed City Policy on homeless camps that includes training for staff and a regularly updated protocol with quick response options linked to housing choice and support.
- Initiate training for city employees and other organizations including police related to the Housing First model.

Desired Outcomes

- Foster a philosophy of empathetic and holistic care.
- Regular meetings with all agencies involved to facilitate a coordinated Housing First response to issues of homelessness.
- Reduction of community stigma around mental health, substance use, and homelessness.

Potential Partners

Fraser Health and social service agencies providing mental health, substance abuse treatment and range of outreach services.

Requirements

Outreach including services to facilitate rapid rehousing related to housing across the housing spectrum.

Priority Action 4.2

Initiate a dialogue on community engagement and volunteerism.

- Initiate a community campaign related to implementation of this Action Plan.
- Initiate a community based employment initiative for those who homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Desired Outcomes

- Reduction of community stigma around mental health, substance use, and homelessness.
- Innovative fundraising strategies are developed for Abbotsford.
- Training and education sessions are provided for staff and outreach personnel.
- Community-wide greater understanding in the complexity of people's lives.
- On-going respectful street to housing transitions that include choice and support services.
- Community Events and opportunities to show care and support of most vulnerable.
- Housing First Training opportunities.
- Education building⁷ into learning units/curriculum as part of the City of Character program and/or Social Justice related courses.
- Employment program opportunities for people previously living in institutions.

Potential Partners

Social service agencies, private landlords and faith groups, police, the University of the Fraser Valley, industry, landowners, K -12 education systems, Elizabeth Fry Society, John Howard, local businesses, criminal justice systems.

Impact Areas

Housing across the spectrum and institutional discharge systems.

⁷ New University of the Fraser Valley Course on Responding to Homelessness in Criminology and Geography to engage students around homelessness issue and institutional discharge employment session to be held October 2014 and 12 people in recent homelessness camp were recently housed.

Strategic Direction 5: Foster Collaboration Between Agencies, Community and Government

Recognizing that solutions to homelessness are based on three essential elements – housing, support services and adequate income – this strategic direction focuses on the requirements for establishing a coherent and collaborative response to implementation of housing, support and employment.

Priority Action 5.1

Establish a Housing and Homelessness Advisory Committee to advise Council on issue of Homelessness going forward.

- Abbotsford City Council should immediately establish a standing Committee of Council comprised of stakeholder agencies (similar in composition to the Homelessness Task Force) to continue the work of the Task Force.
- The Advisory Committee can further initiate working groups comprised of broader representation to work on key issues and actions.

Desired Outcomes

- Collaboration on new initiatives to address housing and service gaps.
- Regular meetings and communication with all stakeholders related to implementation of Homelessness Action Plan and other Housing First activities.
- Community wide coordination of all outreach services — client-centered, recovery-oriented outreach mental health services.

Priority Action 5.2

Establish a Housing First centre that will act as a hub where organizations can connect over funding and research related to housing and support for persons who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

- Continue to work with community agencies in advisory capacity to ensure collaboration around the support and connection to housing and support for all vulnerable groups including seniors and youth.
- Support regional coordination related to grant applications, funding campaigns, inventories, homeless counts, evidence based research and other community based initiatives, such as a mobile outreach support vehicle.

Desired Outcomes

- Advisory Group made up with community service, government and housing providers.
- Reduced dependency on emergency services.
- Information about recovery-oriented, client-oriented, and harm-reduction practices are shared and emphasized.
- Grant program for innovative programs.
- Regular updating of inventories, homeless counts and relevant research.
- Collaboration on new initiatives to address housing and service gaps.

Potential Partners

Government agencies, Fraser Valley Regional District, social service agencies, faith-based groups, local businesses, the University of the Fraser Valley and adjacent municipalities.

Impact Areas

Collaboration and partnerships needed to impact all housing across the housing spectrum.

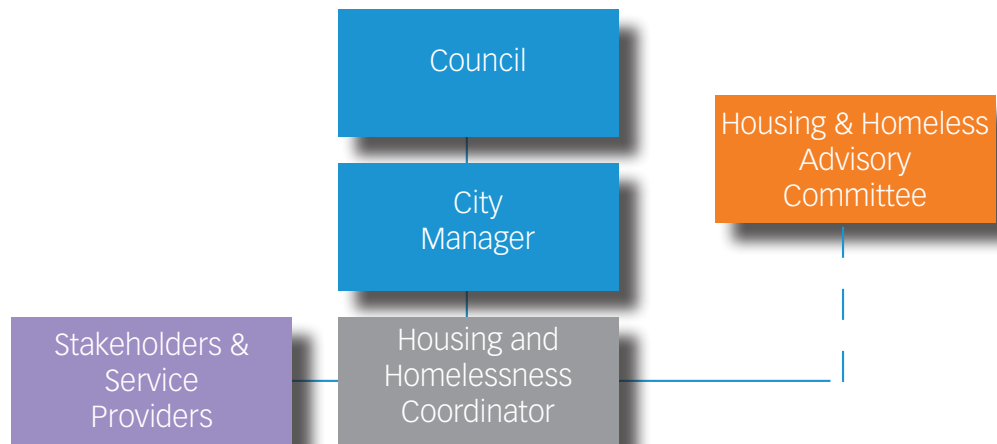
Implementation

This Action Plan builds on important community initiatives promotes collaboration around new ideas and proposes immediate actions to address some of the recognized issues. In addressing these challenges, it is recognized that there is a need for a multi-jurisdictional approach (i.e. Federal, Provincial, Fraser Health Authority, and various service providers) to support a “grass-roots” response to the issue.

All aspects of the Action Plan aspire to the goal of ‘Housing First’ as a way of addressing homelessness in Abbotsford. This approach requires the provision of immediate housing and then working with participants to promote recovery and well-being. Building on the success of other communities, the proposed activities within this document adhere to the core principles of ‘Housing First’, including: Immediate access to housing with no housing readiness requirements; consumer choice and self-determination, which is enabled through the provision of a rent supplements; individualized, client-driven, and recovery-oriented supports; separation of housing and services; harm reduction; and community integration⁸.

The basis for achieving all stated goals is reflected in the expertise and roles of membership on the Abbotsford Task Force on Homelessness. The proposed approach requires on-going monitoring and research to demonstrate the effectiveness of the Action Plan and other Abbotsford initiatives with respect to: increased housing stability; improved quality of life, and improved health and addiction outcomes; reduced involvement with police and the justice system; reduced costs associated with justice system and health expenditures; and reduced hospitalization and emergency visits⁹.

The diagram below outlines a proposed governance structure for implementation of the recommendations for each strategic direction.



⁸ <http://ccepp.ca/news/homeless-hubs-housing-first-toolkit>

⁹ <http://stophomelessness.ca/wp-content/uploads/2008/09/CanadianHousingFirstToolkit.pdf>

Timeline and Process

The Task Force will submit their final Action Plan to Abbotsford City Council in October 2014. It is proposed that the process to hire a coordinator to implement the Action Plan be initiated immediately, with all other action items be implemented within a 3-year time frame. Furthermore, with approval of the Action Plan, formal applications to Federal Government, BC Housing and Fraser Health related to support for implementation of the Action Plan are to be submitted.

The end of homelessness is a collective effort and requires partnerships with all levels of government and with the private, non-profit, faith-based, education and research organizations and countless volunteers, including those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Through partnership and collaboration, it is believed the priority actions and recommendations will positively affect housing and service outcomes across the housing spectrum for vulnerable citizens in Abbotsford.

Abbotsford

A City Where Everyone Has a Home

PROPOSED 3 TO 5 YEAR HOMELESSNESS ACTION PLAN

Key Outcomes

 Work with Government and Social Service Agencies to develop a procurement strategy for development of 50-60 units of housing across the housing spectrum including:



including use with low barrier housing



and additional mental health beds

No-one lives outside for more than

7 DAYS

Improved food security, health and stability for those staying in shelters and supportive housing.



& MORE INCLUDING...

Fundraising and grant opportunities for innovative programs



Work with Fraser Health and Community Partners to launch an Assertive Community Treatment (ACT)



Improve application processes for Housing First Initiatives (Recovery houses, scattered site housing, etc)



Strengthen existing support services including rental bank



Community Education building into learning units/curriculum

Prevention strategies for 4000 plus households at risk of homelessness



Conclusion

On March 20, 2014, Abbotsford City Council announced the formation of a Task Force on Homelessness and appointed representatives from government agencies and community sectors. The Homelessness Task Force embarked upon the significant undertaking of examining not only the conditions and responses to homelessness that exist in Abbotsford today, but also of drafting a plan that contemplated potential steps for the City of Abbotsford to consider going forward. Over the last few months the Task Force met, sometimes weekly, in order to fulfill Abbotsford City Council's directive to work closely with all levels of the community to design and initiate a comprehensive, community-wide homelessness response plan.

The idea that: *'Abbotsford, a city where everyone has a home'* reflects a shared understanding that it is important to have housing options across the housing spectrum, including low or no-barrier housing.

Each of these strategic directions is based on analysis as well as in Housing-First best practices from other jurisdictions, and will require continued collaboration with all key government stakeholders (APD, BC Housing, Fraser Health, Social Development and with the Federal Homelessness Partnering Initiative), social service agencies, and community faith and business partners.

While all directions are weighted equally, of key note in this report is the importance of hiring a Housing and Homelessness Coordinator position, and that a transitional smaller advisory working group or Housing and Homelessness Advisory Committee facilitate grant applications and other more immediate actions until a more formal structure is established.

Although there is still much to be accomplished, the ideas reflected in each strategic direction are intended to inspire the City of Abbotsford to continue working in collaboration with stakeholders to ensure that Abbotsford is a city where everyone has a home.

Appendices Included in the Background Report

- Abbotsford Homelessness Task Force Terms of Reference
- Minutes of Task Force and Council Reports
- Summary Report - 2014 Homelessness Count and Homelessness Surveys
- Mapping of Key Challenges
- Links to Key Documents

Terms and Definitions¹⁰

Acceptable Housing – Housing that is not in need of major repairs, as reported by the residents.

Adequate Housing – Housing that is acceptable (see Acceptable Housing), affordable (see Affordable Housing), and suitable (see Suitable Housing). Housing that is not adequate is Below Housing Standards.

Affordable Housing – Housing that costs less than 30% of total before-tax household income for all monthly payments inclusive of rent and utilities.

Core Housing Need – Households whose housing is below standards (see Housing Below Standards) and who would have to pay 30% or more of its total before-tax income to pay the median rent of alternative local accommodation that is Adequate Housing.

Acceptable Housing – Housing that is not in need of major repairs, as reported by the residents.

Homelessness – When an individual/family lacks a safe, fixed, regular and adequate place to sleep, or who regularly spends the night in an emergency shelter, similar institution, or a place not intended for human habitation.

Homelessness can be further broken down into the following categories:

Absolute Homelessness - When an individual/family is without a residence and sleeps in indoor or outdoor public places not intended for habitation (e.g. streets, parks, abandoned buildings, stairwells, doorways, cars, or under bridges).

Sheltered Homelessness – When an individual/family is without a residence and spends the night in an emergency shelter or similar institution, including having no fixed address and staying overnight in a hospital, jail or prison.

At-risk of Homelessness – When an individual/family is spending 50% or more of its gross monthly income on housing, or when the condition of the housing either because of state of repair or number of occupants is inadequate for ongoing habitation.

Chronic Homelessness – When an individual/family experiences continuous homelessness for a period of one year or greater; or, four or more episodes of homelessness within a three-year period. Most often chronically homeless persons also have complex, co-occurring and frequently disabling conditions.

Episodic Homelessness – When an individual/family experiences homelessness for less than a year and no more than three instances of homelessness within a three-year period.

¹⁰ City of Kingston Homelessness and Housing Action Plan

Cyclical Homelessness – When an individual/family moves in and out of various states of homelessness and housing such as moving from a motel to a low-cost rental, to a point of incarceration, to a shelter, to a hospital stay, and so on. The cycle suggests that this is a pattern of housing status that has some consistency in the movement between a homeless and housed state, even though the exact types of housing or homelessness may change.

Invisible Homelessness (Hidden Homelessness) - When an individual/family does not access emergency shelters or sleep in visible public areas, usually because they are temporarily staying with friends or family.

Homeless Family – A unit comprising one or more adults accompanying at least one minor, usually but not always a blood relative, who are homeless.

Homeless Youth – A youth who is between the ages of 16-24, without adult supervision, and is homeless.



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