

Plan to End Homelessness: City of Regina Alignment

Date	March 3, 2020
To	Mayor’s Housing Commission
From	City Planning & Community Development
Service Area	Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services
Item No.	MHC20-1

RECOMMENDATION

Mayor’s Housing Commission recommends that City Council:

1. Endorse the Plan to End Homelessness and affirm the City of Regina’s role in homelessness as described in the Plan to End Homelessness and this report.
2. Direct Administration to contribute \$20,000 to the Systems Planning Organization, as selected by the Regina Homelessness Community Advisory Board in 2020 for coordination of the Plan to End Homelessness and include future requests within the annual budget process.
3. Delegate to the Executive Director, City Planning & Community Development authority to negotiate a funding agreement with the Systems Planning Organization.
4. Approve these recommendations at its March 25, 2020 meeting.

ISSUE

Regina’s Plan to End Homelessness (the Plan) (Appendix A), released on June 20, 2019, identifies roles for each level of government and other agencies in a coordinated approach to ending chronic and episodic homelessness. The Plan defines the City of Regina’s (City) role as supporting plan coordination and continuing to respond to homelessness within programs and policies. This role is strongly aligned with previous decisions of Council defining the City’s role in homelessness. On June 25, 2018, City Council passed the motion “That the City of Regina continue providing in-kind and financial support towards confronting

homelessness as discussed in this report.” The report (CR18-67 – Appendix B) reinforced the leadership role of the Federal and Provincial Governments in responding to homelessness.

Concurrent with release of the Plan and development of this analysis, Regina’s delivery structure for homelessness funding is undergoing significant change as a result of Federal Government program changes. New roles are defined within the Plan as well, and it will take some months for the right agencies and roles to be in place and functioning at the desired level.

This report provides an update on how the City is responding to the Plan within this changing environment. The report provides information on current work underway and new actions and incremental improvements that will help to advance the Plan.

IMPACTS

Accessibility Impact:

Accessibility is at the forefront of the Plan, as it will consider housing and services that are accessible to individuals with diverse needs.

Financial Impact:

A) New Funding

The Plan identifies only one increase in funding from the City, a \$20,000 annual contribution for five years to the Systems Planning Organization (SPO). This funding will support Plan coordination and is intended to be matched by the Provincial and Federal governments. The agency selected by the Regina Homelessness Community Advisory Board (RHCAB) to be the SPO, End Homelessness Regina (EHR), has formally submitted a request to the City for these funds, attached as Appendix C. For 2020, this funding will be absorbed in approved budgets. Future funding will be considered through the annual budget process.

B) Existing Investments

The Plan reinforces the importance of maintaining the City’s current investments, including up to \$2.5 million annually in capital grants as well as tax incentives for below-market and affordable housing through the Housing Incentives Policy (HIP). In January, Council approved amendments to the HIP that will refocus these investments to better respond to the findings and outcomes of the Plan.

Amendments include:

- Introduction of a Capital Grant for On-Site Support Space (e.g. Counselling Unit). In prior years only units intended for habitation have been eligible for grants. Both the Plan and developers of supportive housing have underscored the importance of financial support to make inclusion of counselling units viable.
- Introduction of a Rental Repair Program wherein repairs to qualifying rental units are eligible for a five-year tax exemption of up to 50 per cent of expenses. Through consultation with nonprofit housing providers, investment in renewal of

existing rental units emerged as a key priority and mechanism for increasing the quality and diversity of affordable housing options.

The City continues to provide funding through the Community Investment Grant Program to organizations and programs that support access to housing. In 2019, Council increased funding for the Social Development Stream by \$200,000, for a total of \$1,192,250.

More detail is provided on actions that align with the Plan in Appendix D.

Policy/Strategic Impact:

Direction for the City's role in addressing homelessness is provided in *Design Regina: The Official Community Bylaw No. 2013-48* (Design Regina) and the Comprehensive Housing Strategy.

Through participation, both financial and with in-kind staff support, in developing the Plan, the City has directly responded to the Design Regina Policy 13.15 to "participate in the development of a comprehensive plan to address homelessness in partnership with other levels of government". Through commitment to implementing the Plan, the City is responding to Policy 13.14 to "work with others to ensure that all residents have secure access to basic needs, such as food, housing and other services."

All work on homelessness to date has responded to the Comprehensive Housing Strategy which has three goals related to homelessness.

- Goal 27 "continue to support housing and homelessness initiatives through the Community Investment Grants Program and identify ways to allocate funding for maximum community impact".
 - The Community Investment Grant Program Social Development Stream includes the priority to support programs that support access to housing for vulnerable individuals. The Plan's findings will support increased understanding at the time of grant adjudication of where the City can best allocate its funding for maximum impact.
- Goal 28 "continue to play a lead role in the federal government's Homelessness Partnering Strategy by preparing the Community Plan to Address Homelessness".
 - The City supports the Homelessness Partnering Strategy, now Reaching Home, by providing a representative to RHCAB. RHCAB has adopted the Plan as its Community Plan to guide funding decisions.
- Goal 35 "play a lead facilitation role in establishing and coordinating a housing and homelessness coalition of community stakeholders as a way of coordinating collaboration, engaging stakeholders and obtaining advice".
 - Engagement of the community and people with lived experience was critical to development of the Plan. The RHCAB provides a forum for collaboration, engagement and advice on homelessness issues. The City will continue to

participate as a standing member of RHCAB and will engage and support other efforts for dialogue on issues related to housing and homelessness.

The role for the City identified in the Plan is aligned and consistent with its current commitments and policies. Successful implementation of the Plan will require the Federal and Provincial governments' response and full participation as per the recommendations in order for the Plan to be realized.

OTHER OPTIONS

1. Defer endorsement of the Plan and the funding commitment to the 2021 budget process. Much of the action required by the Plan has implications for funding and systems at the provincial level, and full implementation will not be possible without collaboration between all three levels of government. Therefore, Council may wish to wait to endorse the Plan until more is known about actions to be taken by the Federal and Provincial Governments.

There has already been a loss of momentum on implementation of the Plan as a result of the time lag between completion and endorsement. Council's endorsement will demonstrate the City's support for the Plan and could stimulate more statements of support from other levels of government.

2. Do not endorse the Plan or provide funding
The Plan responds both to significant local public engagement and builds on tactics that have already been proven to be successful in Regina and other jurisdictions. The Plan reinforces the importance of work that the City is already doing and the financial implications for the City are not onerous. There is a strong link between the work of the Plan and the strategic direction of the City. As noted on page 2 of this report, the Plan aligns with policies outlined in Design Regina and Comprehensive Housing Strategy.

COMMUNICATIONS

There are no specific communication requirements for this report.

DISCUSSION

A summary of the Plan was submitted to Mayor's Housing Commission in September of 2019 as MHC19-6. Some further highlights are noted below.

Focus of the Plan – How will Regina end homelessness

The Plan lays out a path forward that builds on recent successes, addresses systemic gaps, and calls for a significant increase in investment.

Key to the Plan are expansion of Housing First and complementary programs including 80

new permanent supportive housing spaces, 140 new assertive community treatment spaces, and 130 new intensive case management spaces. These investments will allow for sufficient capacity to meet a full spectrum of needs and ensure that those who require intensive support are able to keep it. In all, 2,227 individuals will be housed if the Plan is fully implemented.

A second critical change called for by the Plan is implementation of a comprehensive coordinated access model. Coordinated Access is a process through which individuals and families experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness, are provided access to housing and support services, based on standardized client intake, assessment of need, and matching and referral to housing.

In total, the Plan calls for \$38 million in program costs and \$25 million in capital costs for a total of \$63 million over five years. Parts of program funding may already exist within the system but requires stronger coordination and alignment to funding priorities. Similarly, it is anticipated that existing and recently renewed capital programs by all three levels of government will be major contributors to the capital requirements of the Plan.

Findings - Research and Engagement

The Plan is based on research that assessed the extent of homelessness by using local data and program information and identifying the social and economic factors impacting homelessness in Regina. Background research was supplemented with extensive community engagement, including community events, workshops, surveys, focus groups, and stakeholder interviews. Engagement prioritized individuals with lived experience. As a result, the Plan responds to unique conditions that exist in Regina that are not universally present in other communities across Canada, including:

1. Over-representation of Indigenous people within the homeless population
Regina's homeless population is predominantly Indigenous; intergenerational trauma and marginalization increase the complexity of moving towards safe and stable housing. Additional complexity occurs because of elevated rates of health and addictions issues and experience with violence and poverty. In response, the Plan calls for the community to approach homelessness through a Truth and Reconciliation lens. Agencies and systems require strong cultural competencies and a deeper awareness across sectors and services about the root causes of homelessness within the Indigenous population.
2. The Success of Housing First
Housing First is based on the principle that the first and primary need of a person experiencing homelessness is to obtain stable, permanent housing. Addictions or mental health can be appropriately addressed once adequate housing is obtained. As a result of community consultation and leading practice research, Regina initiated a Housing First pilot in 2016, selecting Phoenix Residential Society (PRS) as the service organization to lead this initiative. The PRS program matched people who were chronically homeless not only to long-term

housing arrangements, but to support systems as well. Initial results of this approach were collected in 2017 and 2018, showing promising outcomes including a significant reduction in calls for service and interactions with law enforcement.

3. Need for Data

The Plan identifies the Regina homeless-serving community's lack of real-time data as a challenge in accurately reflecting the full magnitude of homelessness in Regina. The Plan directs resources towards an improvement of Regina's data collection to strengthen the effectiveness of Housing First and the process of assessing and matching people experiencing homelessness to housing and services.

Roles

The Plan outlines a collaborative approach to ending homelessness in Regina. Resources and commitment from each order of government, various agencies, community-based organizations, and service providers is required. The following discussion highlights the roles for key stakeholders in ensuring the success of the Plan.

System Planning Organization (SPO)

The SPO, as outlined in the Plan, is an autonomous body that exists to oversee Plan coordination, and monitor, evaluate, and report on progress in Plan implementation. The SPO will ensure that resources are used most effectively for implementation of the Plan and will be responsible to bring together stakeholders to achieve the Plan targets.

End Homelessness Regina (EHR) has been selected as the SPO. EHR has begun positioning themselves within Regina as an informational hub and community resource for agencies, shelters, businesses, and organizations to find and share information on issues relating to homelessness. This hub will allow service providers to access information on events, studies, reports and facts on homelessness in Regina in order to develop more coordinated and collaborative responses to homelessness in the community.

Although EHR is in early stages of development, they have already made progress in the initial action items of the Plan, as they have initiated the development of a staffing model and terms of reference, recruitment of community leaders and board members, and analyzing different funding avenues to ensure their overall sustainability. Administration has had continued contact with EHR and will provide capacity building support, especially as they navigate the initial formalities of developing a new organization.

City of Regina

As noted, the City has been asked to provide funding support for Plan coordination, and to continue to support the direction of the Plan in policies and programs that respond to homelessness. In January, Council approved policy and program changes to the Housing Incentive Policy that respond directly to findings in the Plan. Appendix D provides more detail on current work that aligns with the direction of the Plan.

Government of Saskatchewan

The Government of Saskatchewan has also been asked to provide funding support for Plan coordination, as well as support for Homelessness Data collection efforts. Page 17 of the Plan identifies over \$40,000,000 in Provincial Government funding, including new housing supports, assertive community treatment spaces, intensive case management spaces, and permanent supportive housing and affordable housing units.

Government of Canada

Similar to the City of Regina and Government of Saskatchewan, the Federal Government has been asked to contribute funding to support the Plan coordination efforts. Other requests include funding via the National Housing Strategy which will specifically support the development of permanent supportive housing spaces, affordable housing spaces, prevention/diversion interventions, support for local data collection, and expansion of Reaching Home funding.

DECISION HISTORY

CM17-12: YMCA of Regina Funding - The Plan to End Homelessness in Regina

On September 25, 2017, City Council adopted CM17-12 to commit \$60,000 in funding that would be directed to the Community Entity, the YMCA, to assist in creation of the Plan.

CR18-67: City of Regina's Role in Homelessness

On June 25, 2018, City Council considered report CR18-67 which provided an overview of the City's response to homelessness, including measures to increase supply and decrease the cost of housing through the HIP, the Community Investment Grants Program which provides support to organizations and programs that address homelessness, and participation on the Regina Homelessness Community Advisory Board (RHCAB).

MHC19-6: Plan to End Homelessness in Regina

On September 17, 2019, a report providing background on the Plan and its key content went to Mayor's Housing Commission. At this meeting, the YMCA also provided their overview of the Plan. Administration committed to returning to Mayor's Housing Commission with a more thorough analysis of the Plan.

The recommendations in this report require City Council approval.

Respectfully submitted,



Laurie Shalley, Director, Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services

Respectfully submitted,



Diana Hawryluk, Executive Director, City Planning & Community Dev.

2/25/2020

Prepared by: Dave Slater, Coordinator, Social Inclusion

ATTACHMENTS

Appendix A - Plan to End Homelessness In Regina

Appendix B - Report CR18-67

Appendix C - EHR Proposal

Appendix D - Detailed Work Alignment