CITY OF RICHMOND
HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY
2019–2029

Richmond

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Richmond Homelessness Strategy is an action-oriented strategy intended to guide collaborative work within the homeless-serving system in Richmond over the next ten years. The Homelessness Strategy is the result of a multi-phased process that included analysis of statistics related to homelessness in Richmond, best practice research, steering committee meetings, and public engagement with a range of residents, including individuals with lived experience.

There are many factors that may lead someone to experience homelessness, including lack of income, lack of access to affordable housing options and medical services, traumatic events, addiction issues, physical health problems, or mental health concerns. As of 2019, homelessness remains a critical issue across Metro Vancouver and in Richmond. The 2017 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count estimates that a minimum of 70 individuals experience homelessness in Richmond, although non-profit service providers in Richmond estimate this number to be much higher, noting that collectively they serve over 190 clients experiencing homelessness.

Building on several recent successes, including the development of Storeys and the new Emergency Shelter, the Strategy defines a new vision statement, five strategic directions, and a set of specific recommended actions. Based on input from a steering committee for the project, the Homelessness Strategy 2019–2029 defines the following vision statement:

> *"By 2029, homelessness in Richmond will be rare, brief and non-recurring. Richmond is an inclusive community that works in collaboration to provide a continuum of housing and support services."*

To achieve this vision, the Strategy provides five strategic directions:

1. Prevent pathways into homelessness;
2. Support residents who are experiencing homelessness;
3. Provide pathways out of homelessness;
4. Foster collaboration and capacity-building among community partners; and
5. Communicate, research and monitor homelessness.

The City is committed to playing a proactive leadership role to make homelessness in Richmond rare, brief and non-recurring. However, achieving this vision requires dedicated, sustainable sources of funding from all levels of government, particularly the provincial and federal governments. With involvement from all sectors—public, non-profit, and the private sector—all Richmond residents experiencing homelessness can receive the supports and housing options necessary to achieve stability in their lives.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Homelessness Strategy 2019–2029 is an action-oriented framework intended to guide City and stakeholder involvement in homelessness initiatives over the next 10 years. The Strategy was developed based on:

- Analysis of statistics related to homelessness in Richmond;
- Research regarding best practices and emerging approaches for meeting the needs of individuals experiencing homelessness;
- Six meetings held with a project Steering Committee; and
- A variety of public engagement activities, including an online feedback form posted on the Let's Talk Richmond website, a public open house, 20 different focus groups held with a range of local organizations and residents, and meetings with individuals with lived experience.

There are many factors that may lead someone to experience homelessness. These can include lack of adequate income, access to affordable housing options and medical services, experiences of discrimination, traumatic events and personal crisis, addiction issues, physical health problems, disability or mental health concerns. Homelessness is a difficult experience and causes physical and mental suffering. It is not something that most people would want to experience for themselves or their loved ones.

Homelessness is a complex issue and cannot be solved in isolation. Accordingly, the recommended actions presented in this strategy are informed by the principles of collaboration, partnership-building, and shared funding responsibility. Many stakeholders, including all levels of government, non-profit housing and service providers, community organizations and the private sector, have important roles to play in addressing the needs of Richmond residents experiencing homelessness.

The Need for a New Strategy

In 2002, Richmond City Council adopted Richmond's first Homelessness Strategy, *It's My City Too*. Guided by this strategy, the City and its partners achieved a number of successes, including:

- The development of Storeys, a 129-unit affordable housing development and social service hub for families and individuals at risk of homelessness;
- The creation of a new 30 bed emergency shelter;
- The operation of new homeless-serving programs, including the St. Alban's shower program and the resource centre space; and
- The development of temporary modular supportive housing, a 40-unit supportive housing building for individuals experiencing homelessness.

Despite these and other achievements, homelessness and housing instability remain critical concerns for many individuals and families in Richmond. In 2018, the City of Richmond embarked on a process to update the 2002 Homelessness Strategy. The City of Richmond remains committed to working proactively and

through partnerships to meet the housing and support service needs of all Richmond residents, including those at risk or experiencing homelessness. Since 2002, a new body of knowledge has developed regarding tools that enable individuals experiencing homelessness to achieve stability in their lives. The actions set out in the Homelessness Strategy 2019–2029 will help to ensure that up-to-date and flexible approaches are used in Richmond.

Steering Committee and Guiding Principles

A Steering Committee was formed by the City to provide input into the development of the Homelessness Strategy 2019–2029. Membership was comprised of representatives from the following organizations:

- Atira Women's Resource Society
- BC Housing
- Chimo Community Services
- Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction (MSDPR)
- Richmond RCMP
- Richmond Addiction Services Society (RASS)
- Richmond Poverty Response Committee (PRC)
- The Salvation Army
- Turning Point Recovery Society
- Vancouver Coastal Health Richmond (VCH)

Early in the planning process, the Steering Committee defined the following guiding principles to direct the development of the Homelessness Strategy 2019–2029:

- Align with and complement existing City strategies, plans and policies that address and affect housing and homelessness in Richmond;
- Develop a strong network of supportive services for individuals experiencing homelessness in Richmond;
- Reference and use the evidence-based Housing First model (a recovery-oriented approach that centers on moving individuals experiencing homelessness into independent and permanent housing, then providing additional supports and services as needed);
- Focus on partnerships and collaboration among service and housing providers to meet the diverse needs of individuals experiencing or at-risk of homelessness; and,
- Increase awareness and education around the need for and benefits of supporting vulnerable residents.

Alignment with Other City Policies

The Homelessness Strategy 2019–2029 is an action oriented framework that aligns with and is supported by a range of other City of Richmond plans and strategies. Key examples of supporting projects include the following:

Richmond 2041 Official Community Plan (OCP): The OCP cites the City's commitment to ensuring an appropriate mix of housing options is available for Richmond's diverse population through the following actions:

- Encourage a variety of housing types, mixes and densities to accommodate the diverse needs of residents;

- Collaborate with other levels of government, external agencies and community partners to secure appropriate funding, housing and services for people experiencing homelessness, with the aim of reducing and ultimately eliminating homelessness; and

- Facilitate the establishment of an equitable, inclusive community, whereby City plans, policies, services and practices respect the diverse needs of all segments of the population.

Richmond Social Development Strategy 2013–2022 (Building our Social Future): The following Social Development Strategy actions are achieved through the development of the Homelessness Strategy 2019–2029:

- Update the Homelessness Strategy, in collaboration with other community partners, examining housing and support service needs and options for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in Richmond; and

- Continue participation in local and regional homelessness initiatives.

City of Richmond Affordable Housing Strategy 2017–2027: The Richmond Homelessness Strategy builds on the following strategic directions provided in the Affordable Housing Strategy:

- Use the City's regulatory tools to encourage a diverse mix of housing types;

- Maximize use of City resources and financial tools;

- Build capacity with non-profit housing and service providers;

- Facilitate and strengthen partnership opportunities; and

- Increase advocacy, awareness and education roles.

City of Richmond Community Wellness Strategy 2018–2023: The Wellness Strategy commits the City to promoting community wellness, including mental health. Specifically, the City commits to:

- Foster healthy, active and involved lifestyles for all Richmond residents with an emphasis on physical activity, healthy eating and mental wellness; and

- Enhance physical and social connectedness within and among neighbourhoods and communities.

2. BACKGROUND

Defining Homelessness

The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness has established the following Canadian definition of homelessness:

> Homelessness describes the situation of an individual, family or community without stable, safe, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it.

> It is the result of a system of societal barriers, a lack of affordable and appropriate housing, the individual/household's financial, mental cognitive, behavioural or physical challenges, and/or racism and discrimination. Most people do not choose to be homeless, and the experience is generally negative, unpleasant, unhealthy, unsafe, stressful and distressing.[1]

Each experience of homelessness is unique. As such, there are a number of indicators including living condition and length of time homeless that are used to identify potential services and types of housing that are required by people experiencing homelessness within a community.

Living Conditions

The term "homelessness" refers to a wide range of physical living conditions for many different groups of people, and includes those who are living outdoors (unsheltered) and those who have some form of temporary and typically precarious shelter. The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness provides four categories of homelessness:

- **Unsheltered or absolutely homeless**, referring to people living on the streets, parks or in other places not intended for human habitation;
- **Emergency sheltered**, referring to people staying in emergency shelters;
- **Provisionally accommodated**, referring to people whose accommodation is temporary or lacking in security of tenure (i.e. staying with friend or family but without permanent and secure housing); and
- **At risk of homelessness**, referring to people who are not homeless, but whose economic or housing situation is precarious or does not meet public health and safety standards.

Length of Experience

People experiencing homelessness are often differentiated by their length of experience:

- **Chronic homelessness** describes the experience of people who are homeless for a year or longer;

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[1] Canadian Observatory on Homelessness. (2012.) Canadian Definition of Homelessness. Toronto: Canadian Observatory on Homelessness Press. homelesshub.ca/homelessdefinition

- **Episodic homelessness** refers to people who move in and out of homelessness; and
- **Transitional homelessness** refers to people who have experienced homelessness for approximately one month or less.

People who have experienced chronic or episodic homelessness may require more intensive and longer term support services when transitioning out of homelessness due to greater chances of having physical or mental health issues, addictions, or involvement with the justice system.

Stakeholder Roles

Homelessness is often the product of intersecting issues such as lack of housing, mental wellness, poverty, and discrimination—making every person's experience of homelessness unique. As a result, solutions to homelessness require collective action from many community partners, and dedicated and sustained sources of funding from the provincial and federal governments.

The Strategy recognizes the importance of partnerships in developing solutions to homelessness and identifies a number of key community partners including the City, non-profit housing and service providers, community organizations, the faith community, senior levels of governments, and other key stakeholders.

Government of Canada

Since 2006, the federal government has invested in a range of homelessness prevention and reduction programs through the Homelessness Partnering Strategy. In June 2018, the federal government announced plans to launch Reaching Home, a replacement for the Homelessness Partnering Strategy. The new program confirms the federal government's commitment to deliver funding for Housing First programs. Reaching Home also prioritizes data-driven homelessness plans, as well as prevention-based outcomes and programs. Program funding is delivered through a local organization that is appointed by the federal government.

Province of British Columbia

BC Housing is the provincial crown corporation responsible for delivering funding and programs related to homelessness. BC Housing delivers funding to a variety of services, including expanding and supporting the operation of shelters, delivering homelessness prevention funding, outreach supports and services, and funding for supportive housing projects for individuals at-risk or experiencing homelessness.

Municipal Role

The City of Richmond is committed to working in partnership with senior levels of government and the private and non-profit sectors, to create the right mix of housing and supportive services for a diverse population, including residents experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Recognizing that senior levels of government have the primary responsibility of providing funding for homeless prevention programs, services and affordable housing, the City is committed to remaining a local leader

that works with community organizations to ensure that homelessness in Richmond is rare, brief and non-recurring. Specifically, these roles include:

- **Advocate:** The City works with community organizations to advocate to senior levels of government for funding and programs that work to make homelessness rare, brief and non-recurring.
- **Analyst:** The City monitors local data and best practice research regarding homelessness to update its policies and plans to reflect current and emerging trends.
- **Communicator:** The City uses best practice research to educate and promote the benefits of an inclusive and mixed income community and the necessity to create a compassionate, non-judgmental response to experiences of homelessness.
- **Supporter:** The City helps assist non-profit housing and service providers by facilitating collaboration, enabling capacity building, and providing financial and in-kind supports.
- **Partner:** The City collaborates and partners with senior levels of government and the private and non-profit sectors to develop a mix of affordable housing options.
- **Planner:** The City gathers information, research and feedback on community needs regarding residents at risk of or experiencing homelessness in order to create policy and implement actions that support housing and homelessness focused services in Richmond.

In addition, City facilities, including libraries and community centres, provide safe spaces where residents experiencing homelessness can access community connection and referrals to other supports and services.

Non-Profit, Social Service and Faith-Based Organizations

Non-profit, social service and faith-based organizations play a critical role in meeting the needs of residents experiencing homelessness. These organizations deliver critical shelter and supportive services to clients to help promote independence, success in achieving housing stability and full participation in their community. Accordingly, the City of Richmond supports non-profit, social services and faith-based organizations in their effort to meet the needs of individuals experiencing homelessness. Outreach and drop-in programming support clients by developing individualized plans to help them work on their own unique barriers. Services include:

- Referrals to government programs, healthcare and mental health services;
- Supportive programming including life and employment training skills;
- Community meals and food outreach;
- Provision of affordable housing units;
- Access to hot showers and laundry;
- Social and community connection; and
- Assistance in finding appropriate market or affordable housing units.

In addition to these important services, the non-profit sector continues to advocate on behalf of vulnerable residents for additional resources.

3. NEEDS ANALYSIS

Homelessness in Richmond

Housing affordability and homelessness continue to be critical issues both regionally and at the local level. The following needs analysis helps to identify current and emerging trends based on an analysis of available data and qualitative information provided by local stakeholders.

It is important to note that it is difficult to characterize people experiencing homelessness. For example, many people become temporarily or episodically homeless over the course of a year and are not typically counted in 24-hour regional homeless counts. In addition, many individuals may be experiencing "hidden homelessness," and are staying with friends or family members, however do not have a permanent or secure home. The statistics summarized below are intended to provide a summary of general trends, however they are not a complete assessment of individuals experiencing homelessness in Richmond.

### Who is experiencing homelessness in Richmond?

The Metro Vancouver Homeless Count has been conducted regionally every three years since 2002. The 2017 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count found 70 individuals experiencing homelessness; this is an 84% increase from the number of individuals counted in 2014. This change is largely consistent with trends seen across the Metro Vancouver region, although the Richmond count has seen greater variation over time, as depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Homeless Individuals Surveyed for Richmond and Metro Vancouver (2005–2017)
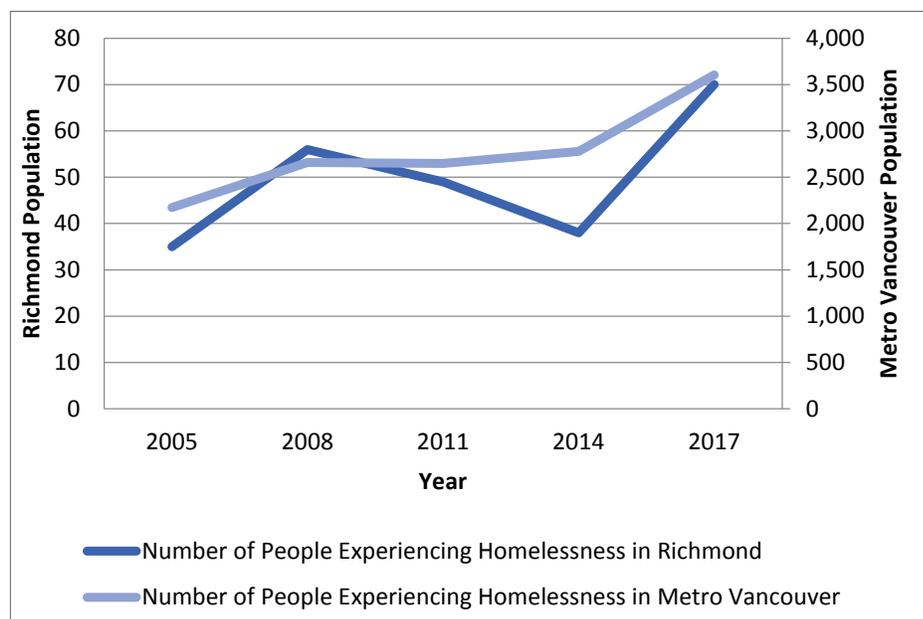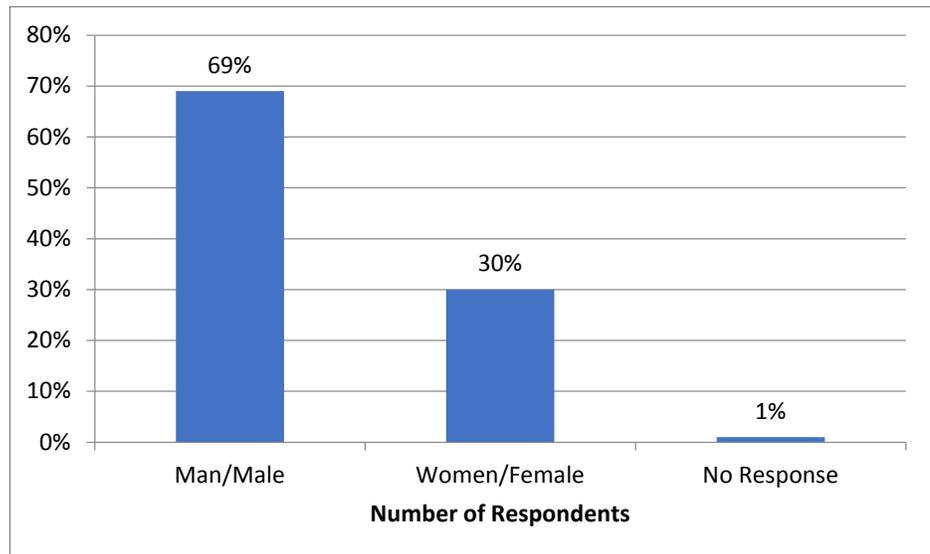
Of the 70 homeless individuals identified by the Richmond count in 2017, 41 individuals were sheltered and 29 individuals were unsheltered. Four of those counted were youth. In the 2018 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count identified 18 youth experiencing homelessness in Richmond.

Figure 2: Homeless Respondents by Sheltered/Unsheltered Status for Richmond (2017)
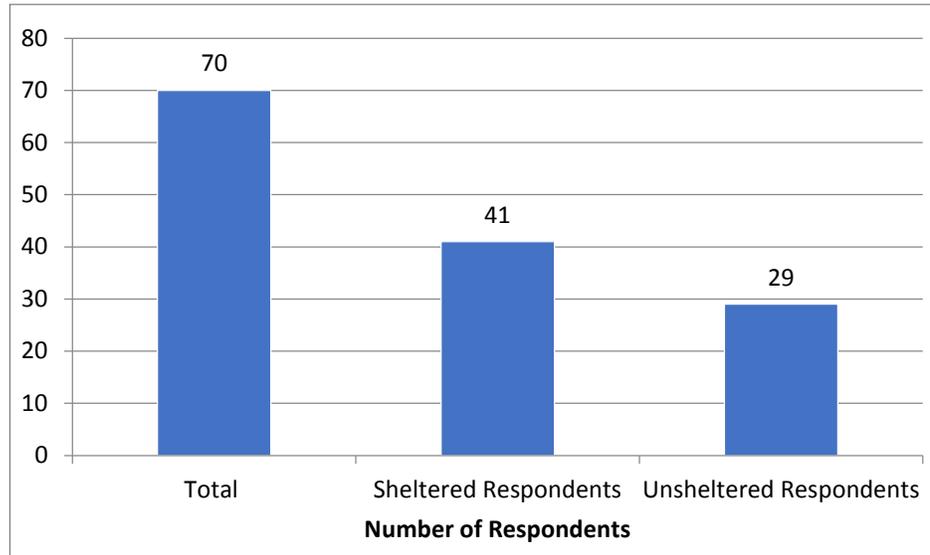
Consistent with prior Homeless Counts and regional trends, men represented a substantially higher proportion of individuals counted. This imbalance may be partially due to the "hidden homelessness effect," whereby women are more likely to find temporary and insecure lodging with friends and family instead of sleeping outdoors while experiencing homelessness.

Figure 3: Percentage of Homeless Respondents by Gender for Richmond (2017)

In the 2017 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count, 35 Richmond individuals identified with one or more health concerns. As depicted in Figure 4, a substantial proportion of individuals were dealing with multiple health concerns.

Figure 4: Health Concerns of Homeless Respondents for Richmond (2017)
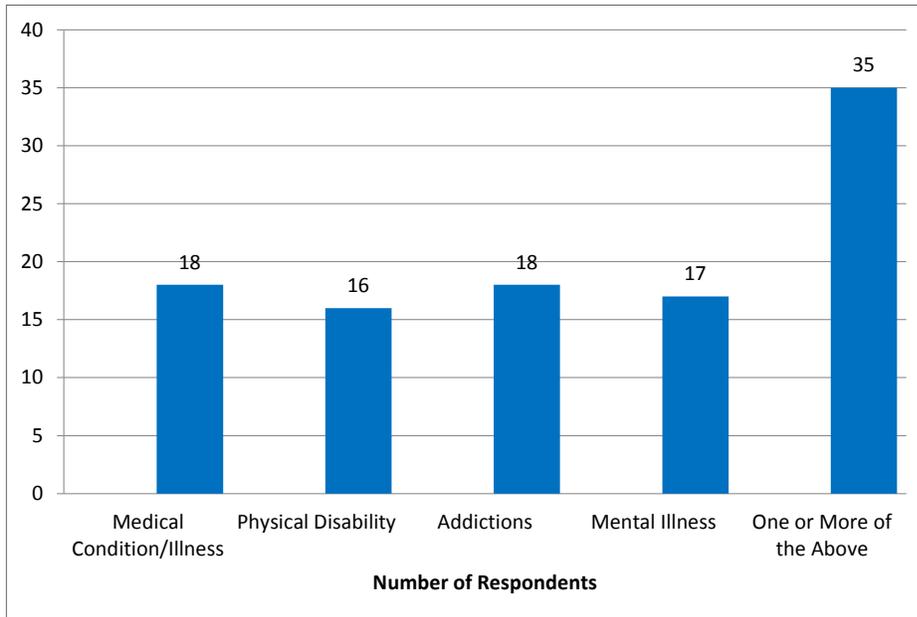
In the 2017 count, 17 of the 70 individuals surveyed were aged 55 and over, two of which were 65 and over. Five individuals were under 15 in the 2017 count; however, in 2018, Metro Vancouver reported a total of 18 children and youth (age 24 and younger) experiencing homelessness in Richmond.

Figure 5: Homeless Respondents by Age for Richmond (2017)
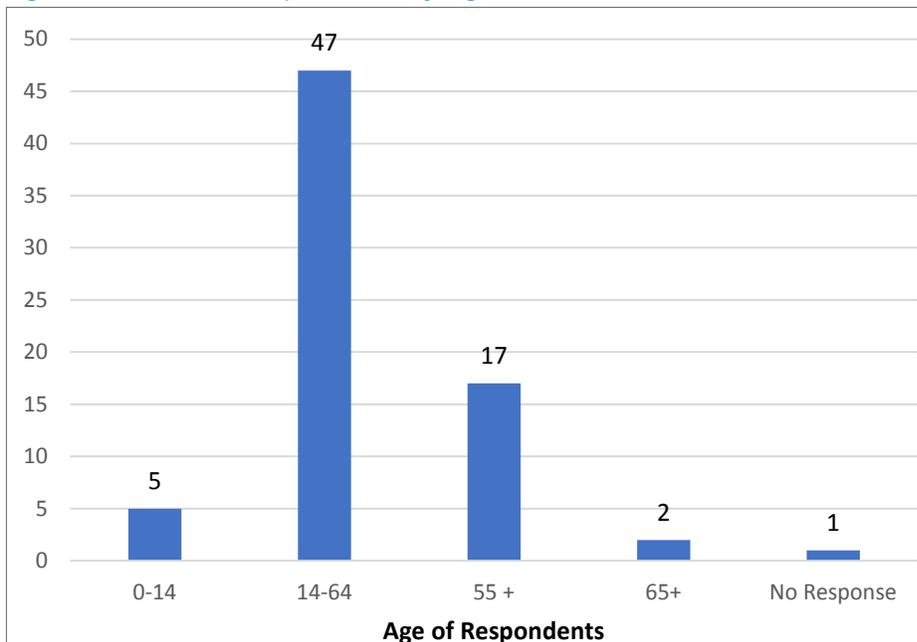
Despite the data that the Metro Vancouver Homeless Count provides, it is recognized that the 24-hour survey is an underestimation since all homeless persons cannot be located in one day. Undercounting is also due to the number of people experiencing hidden homelessness and therefore not captured by the survey and the number of people who are experiencing homelessness but decline to participate in the survey.

Who is at risk of homelessness in Richmond?

Overrepresentation of Low-income Households

The Low-Income Measure after Tax (LIM-AT)[2] provides municipalities with an indicator of the number of households that may be struggling to find housing. According to this measure, Statistics Canada estimates that 22% of Richmond residents were considered low-income in 2016. The percentage of Richmond residents is significantly greater than the regional (16.5%) and provincial (15.5%) averages (2016 Census). However, these estimates may be inflated due to incomplete income data for Richmond residents.

Figure 6: Low Income Measures for Richmond, Metro Vancouver, British Columbia and Canada (2016)
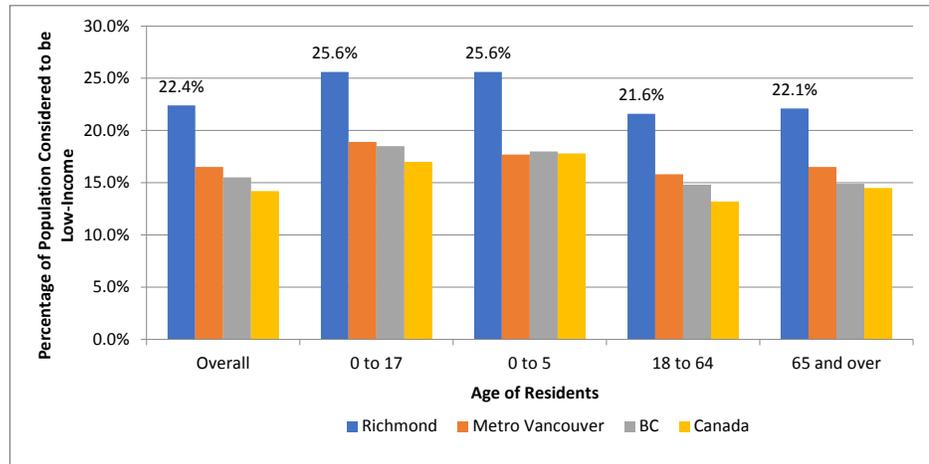
Increasing Shelter Costs and Persistently Low Vacancy Rates

Similar to Metro Vancouver, shelter costs have increased significantly in Richmond since 1990. Average rents for purpose built rental units have increased 80% from 1990 to 2017. In 2018, market rental vacancy rates were 0.7%. In comparison, the average vacancy for purpose-built apartments in Canada's 35 major urban centres was 2.2%. Richmond's lower than average vacancy rates are indicative of a constrained rental market adding pressure for higher rents and making it increasingly difficult for renters to find adequate housing. Low vacancy rates also increase competition among renters, which can lead to landlords discriminating against people who experience barriers to housing.

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2 This measurement is a fixed percentage (50%) of median adjusted after-tax income of households observed at the person level, where "adjusted" indicates that a household's needs are taken into account. Adjustment for household sizes reflects the fact that a household's needs increase as the number of members increases, although not necessarily by the same proportion per additional member. For example, if a household of 4 persons has an after tax income of less than $38,920 all members of the household are considered low-income (Statistics Canada, 2010).

Figure 7: Average Primary Rental Market Rents by Bedroom Type for Richmond (1990–2017)
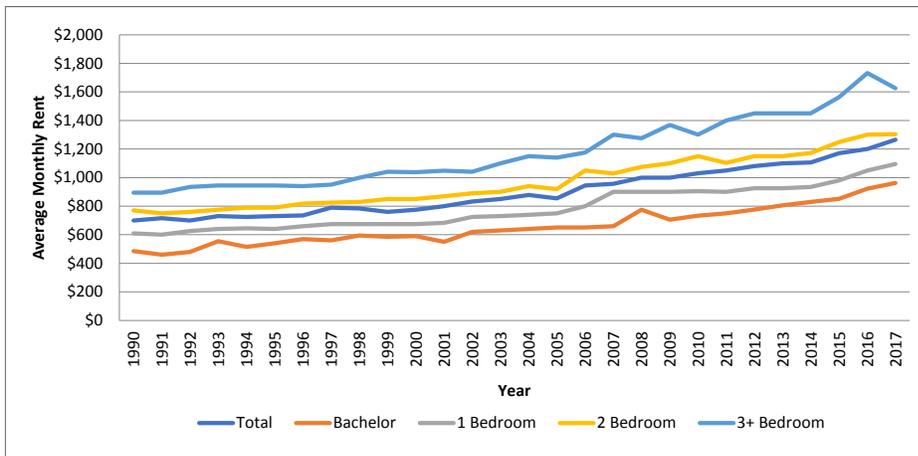
Figure 8: Primary Rental Market Vacancy Rates for Richmond (1990–2017)
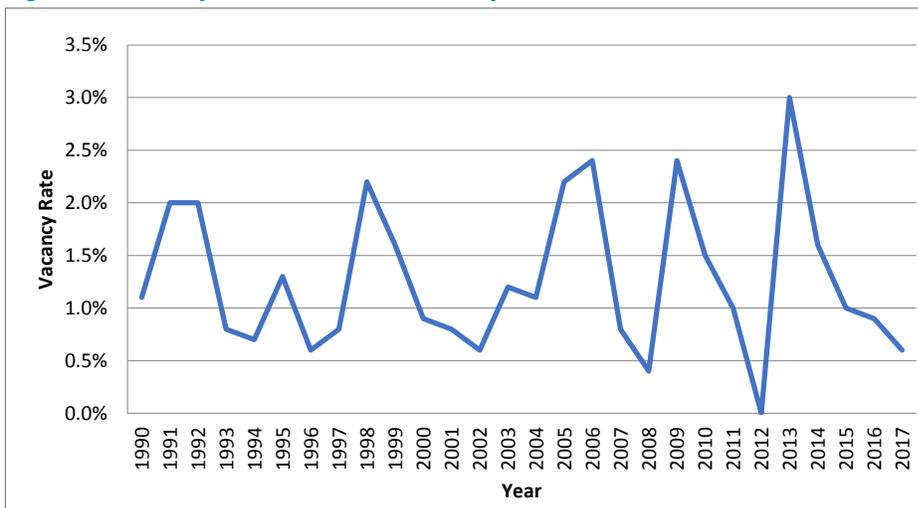
Residents Living in Unsuitable Housing

Richmond has a high proportion of households living in unsuitable housing and experiencing affordability challenges. According to the 2016 Census, 8% of Richmond households were living in unsuitable housing that has too few bedrooms for the size and make-up of the resident household. This is greater than the regional (7.3%) and provincial (5.3%) averages. According to the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation, to be deemed affordable, households should not spend more than 30% of their before tax income on shelter costs. In 2016, 32% of Richmond owner households and 47% of renter households spent greater than 30% of their before tax income on shelter costs, signalling that these households may be facing housing affordability challenges.

Figure 9: Housing Indicators for Richmond, Metro Vancouver, and BC (2016)

	Richmond	Metro Vancouver	BC	Canada
■ Not Suitable	8.0%	7.3%	5.3%	4.9%
■ Major Repairs Needed	5.4%	5.7%	6.3%	6.5%
■ Owner Households Spending 30% or More of Income on Shelter	32.0%	25.4%	20.7%	16.6%
■ Renter Households Spending 30% or More of Income on Shelter	47.1%	43.5%	43.3%	40.0%
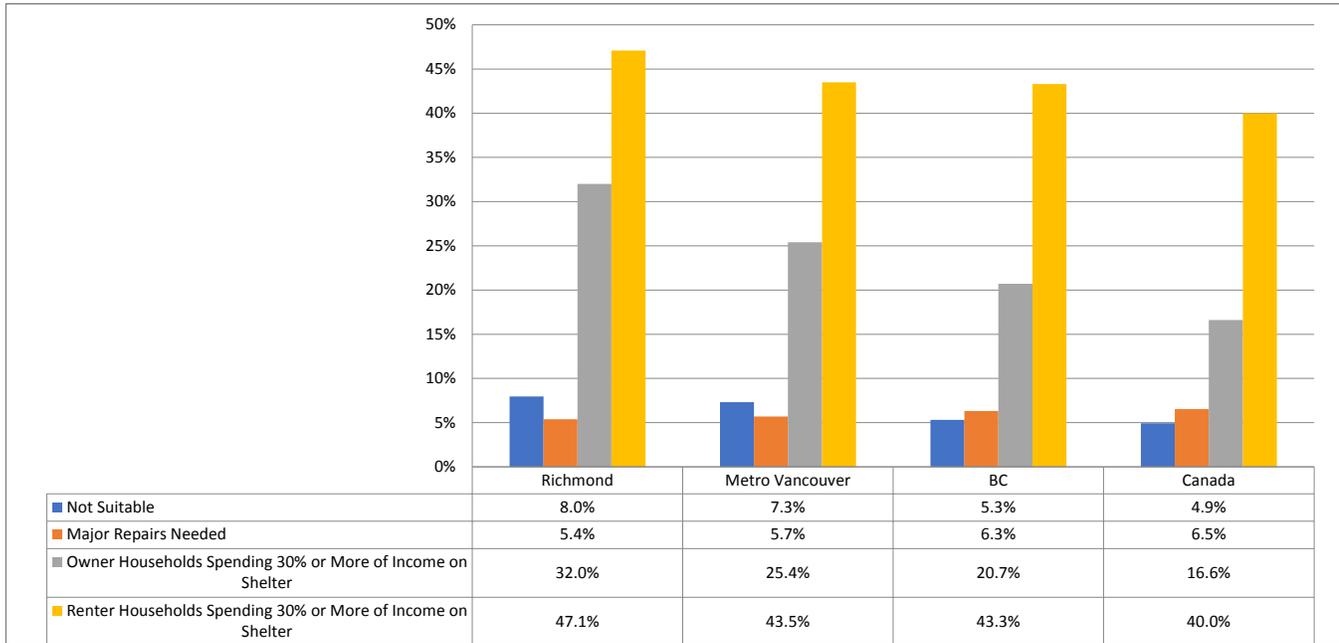
Growing Number of Richmond Households Waiting for Subsidized Housing

BC Housing provides non-market, subsidized housing throughout the province, including rent-geared-to-income for households under specific income thresholds. The Housing Registry Waitlist (BC Housing) for this type of housing in Richmond has increased 58% from 2009 (429 applications) to 2017 (680 applications), with a waiting time of five to seven years. This list is an important indicator of need of households who may be struggling with housing affordability and may be at risk of homelessness. Of note is the number of applicants on the waitlist that are seniors and applicants with disabilities that require affordable housing with wheelchair access. BC Housing currently administers the waitlist.

Figure 10: Housing Registry Waitlist (BC Housing) for Richmond (2009–2017)
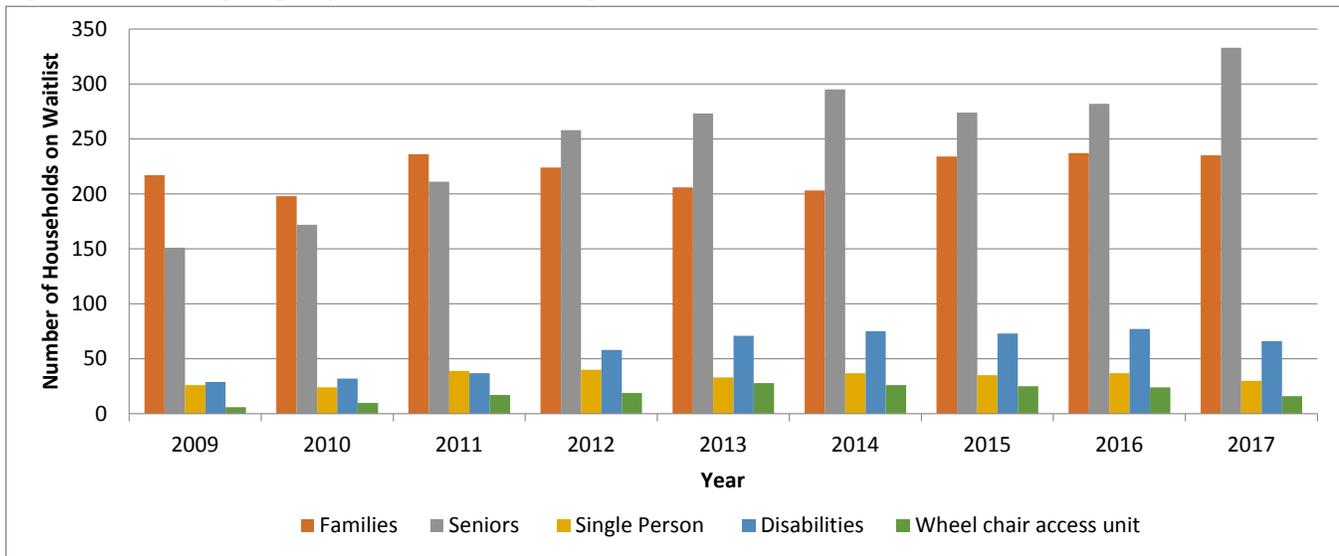
What is the Local Understanding of Homelessness in Richmond?

There are limitations to the available data regarding homelessness in Richmond. Local service providers estimates that at least 193 individuals experienced homelessness between June 2018 and April 2019 in Richmond. Many other clients that access these services are living in precarious situations and may be at risk of homelessness. Other local trends that non-profit organizations witness include:

- There are an increasing number of women and youth experiencing homelessness who access services from local non-profit organizations. However, due to the methodology of the Metro Vancouver Homeless Count, they are underrepresented;

- The Metro Vancouver Homeless Count data does not accurately reflect the magnitude of seniors who are experiencing homelessness and accessing local services;

- Immigrant populations experiencing hidden homelessness are accessing services, however this population was not captured in the Metro Vancouver Homeless Count; and

- There is an increasing number of residents experiencing chronic homelessness who have multiple barriers, including addiction or mental health challenges, and therefore may require more services and support.

Local non-profit organizations continue to work together to provide services and adapt to the changing needs of Richmond residents experiencing homelessness.

Homelessness Services Gaps and Needs

The homeless-serving sector in Richmond is comprised of a variety of dedicated non-profit organizations, advocates, and government partners that have the expertise to meet the needs of individuals experiencing homelessness. Accordingly, a key component of the Homelessness Strategy update process was identifying and building on the existing strengths and capacity of community partners. Despite the strengths existing in the community, a number of specific program and policy gaps were identified. This section evaluates the findings from the data analysis and stakeholder engagement phases of the Homelessness Strategy 2019–2029 to highlight five major gaps that currently exist.

1. The right mix of affordable housing options

Between 2007 and 2018, the City of Richmond helped secure more than 2,000 affordable housing units. Despite this success, housing affordability remains a critical issue in Richmond and across Metro Vancouver. While a number of organizations provide a critical supply of affordable housing in Richmond, stakeholders suggested that there are inadequate housing options for individuals at risk of experiencing homelessness with unique needs. The following housing gaps were identified during the stakeholder engagement and research phases of the Homelessness Strategy project:

- Emergency housing options for youth;
- Second stage and transitional housing units for women and children;
- Housing units for people experiencing homelessness that are suitable to their needs and requirements;
- Culturally appropriate affordable housing for Indigenous individuals; and
- Accessible and affordable rental housing at non-market housing rates for a range of income and demographic groups.

Figure 11: Richmond's Housing Continuum

Subsidized Short-term Accommodation		Affordable Housing				Market Housing	
Emergency Shelter (including Extreme Weather Response Shelters)	Transitional Housing	Supportive Housing	Non-Market/ Social Housing	Low-end Market Rental Housing	Affordable Homeown-ership	Market Rental (including purpose built and secondary)	Market Homeown-ership

The need for dedicated low-barrier housing that meets the individual needs of people experiencing homelessness was emphasized by stakeholders. These types of units may be most appropriate for individuals who have experienced chronic or episodic homelessness, as they may require more intensive and specialized types of supports. In May 2018, Richmond City Council approved the development of 40 units of temporary supportive housing units for five years. Additional units of permanent supportive housing were still identified as a need.

Despite the development of affordable housing in Richmond, there are significant unmet needs at all points of the housing continuum (Figure 11). As highlighted by Figure 12, Metro Vancouver estimates that Richmond will require 14,000 new housing units to meet the needs of new Richmond residents between 2016–2026.

Figure 12: Metro Vancouver Housing Demand Estimates 2016–2026 for Richmond

Richmond Housing Demand Estimates 2016–2026		
Types of Housing	Annual	10 Year
Very Low-income Rental	130	1,300
Low-income Rental	70	700
Moderate Income Rental	60	600
Above Moderate Market Rental	30	300
High Income Market Rental	30	300
Total Rental	320	3,200
Ownership	1,080	10,800
Total Demand	1,400	14,000

Source: Metro Vancouver, 2016.

The current housing market trends in Richmond place significant pressure on the entire housing continuum, and without a sufficient supply of affordable housing, individuals experiencing homelessness face significant challenges when searching for appropriate longer-term housing options.

2. Coordinated service delivery

Richmond has many dedicated organizations that are committed to providing high quality services to individuals who are experiencing homelessness or are at risk of experiencing homelessness in the community. Since the 2002 Richmond Homelessness Strategy, efforts have been made to provide informal and formal collaboration to integrate service provision. This has resulted in a number of successes for Richmond, including the establishment of a Drop-in Centre and an Extreme Weather Response Program.

Multiple stakeholders who provided input into the Homelessness Strategy 2019–2029 however, expressed that the direct delivery of services to persons experiencing homelessness remains uncoordinated and that non-profit providers are largely working in isolation. This lack of coordination can cause challenges for individuals navigating services, including geographical barriers and a lack of coordinated access points, meaning that clients have to make multiple calls and trips to access all relevant services. A lack of systems planning can lead to a number of challenges including duplication of services and the suboptimal use of limited resources. Stakeholders suggested that specific gaps exist regarding coordination at both the strategic (governance) and the outreach and service delivery levels.

3. Population-specific services

Services in Richmond support a range of population groups. Despite this, youth are consistently identified as an under-served group by stakeholders, both in terms of services and housing. In the 2017 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count, 12% of all Richmond residents counted were youth. Service providers state that due to the lack of youth-specific resources, youth who experience homelessness are likely to seek support in other municipalities. The 2017 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count also found that 30% of Richmond's homeless population identified as Indigenous. Despite this overrepresentation, stakeholders suggested that there may be gaps in culturally-responsive services that are able to reduce institutional barriers to Indigenous individuals experiencing homelessness.

Stakeholders emphasised that more youth and Indigenous specific services are required in Richmond. While knowing that these populations are underserved in Richmond, little is known about the need for specific services on an ongoing basis. Stakeholders suggested that additional research is needed and that future programs and services need to be designed to respond to changing needs.

4. Public education and awareness about homelessness in Richmond

There are a number of community groups and faith-based organizations that organize and volunteer for programs to support vulnerable residents who are experiencing homelessness or are at risk of experiencing homelessness. Grass-roots programs, including community meals and the creation of 'survival kits,' are an important part of creating a socially inclusive community.

However, as homelessness is not always visible in Richmond, many residents are not aware of hardships associated with the experiences of homelessness. Public attitudes and stigmatization have the potential to create opposition to critical homeless-centered housing and support services. Critical projects have the potential to be delayed or cancelled over perceived safety concerns and misunderstandings about homelessness. Stakeholders stated that discrimination and stigma towards persons with an experience of homelessness is the main barrier that individuals face in accessing safe and secure housing.

Stakeholders also noted that a comprehensive public education campaign regarding homelessness is needed. It was suggested that local initiatives that are already underway (i.e. public art installations and theatre performances focusing on lived experiences of homelessness) may create a broader culture of social inclusiveness and understanding around homelessness.

5. Coordinated and reliable data

Stakeholders have highlighted that local coordinated data is needed in Richmond to complement data from Metro Vancouver Homeless Count. It was further noted that local data, including basic demographic information and information about the individual's use of service, would support service coordination and integration in Richmond. Stakeholders believe that coordinated data would provide an opportunity to better understand Richmond's homeless population and to understand how best to adapt specific resources to the needs of people experiencing homelessness as they change over time.

4. BEST PRACTICES

As part of the Homelessness Strategy 2019–2029 update process, the following national best and emerging practices were analysed. These best practices were chosen due to their proven effectiveness in other communities and their transferability to the Richmond context.

Housing First Program

Housing First programs provide access to independent housing units for people experiencing homelessness. Housing First programs focus on quickly moving people from homelessness into housing and then providing individualized supports and services as needed. Services may include mental and physical health care, addictions treatment, employment and life skills training. The primary assumption underlying Housing First programs is that people are better able to move forward with their lives if they are first housed.

Housing First programs have six main principles that include:

1. **Rapid housing placement with supports.**

This involves helping clients locate and secure accommodation as quickly as possible and providing moving assistance.

2. **Providing clients with choice.**

Clients must be given a reasonable choice in terms of housing options as well as the services they wish to access.

3. **Separating housing provision from treatment services.**

Acceptance of treatment, following treatment or compliance with services is not a requirement for clients to access securing housing.

4. **Providing tenancy rights and responsibilities.**

Clients need to be informed about tenant rights and responsibilities of a typical tenancy prior to moving in to a Housing First unit. Clients need to contribute a portion of their income towards rent. Understanding tenant expectations will add to a client's life skills training.

5. **Integrating housing into the community.**

Ideally, Housing First options are integrated into the community and not segregated. If a client is interested, their outreach worker will work with them to encourage participation in the community.

6. **Recovery based and promoting self-sufficiency.**

Housing First programs focus on the capabilities of the client, based on individualized and self-determined goals. These may include employment and life skills training, education and participation in the community.

Housing First programs aim to include these core elements; however, implementing Housing First differs significantly between communities due to specific needs of people experiencing homelessness, resources and local context.

Housing First programs are designed to be temporary and enable clients to transition into long-term housing options that meet their specific needs. When leaving the program, many Housing First clients become financially independent and are able to secure independent, private-market housing, while others require access to non-market housing to maintain housing stability. For clients with complex health, addiction, or other challenges, maintaining long-term stability may require access to supportive housing with on-site supports.

Evidence from other Canadian communities, such as Calgary and Winnipeg, shows that Housing First programs to address homelessness can have a significant impact in reducing the number of individuals experiencing chronic or episodic homelessness in a community.

While there is desire to implement a Housing First program in Richmond, several limitations have been identified. For example, since Housing First programs often provide housing units in private-market rental buildings, Richmond's very low rental vacancy rate may act as a structural barrier to implementing a conventional Housing First model.

Systems Approach to Homelessness

Creating a systems approach to addressing homelessness is built on the foundation of viewing the homeless-serving system as an integrated set of parts that work towards common goals. Research indicates that collaborative decision-making is a core component of this approach. Collaboration means that government (including local, provincial and federal governments) and non-government stakeholders of all types work together to make collective decisions about priority needs, strategies and resources required to address these needs. This includes supporting local and sub-regional planning tables, supporting new partnerships, building consensus on new regional initiatives, and encouraging networking, information exchange and education amongst partners.

A systems approach to homelessness often includes the following elements:

- Collaborative decision making;
- Coordinated outreach and access points;
- Community wide use of data systems;
- Coordinated service delivery; and
- Integration with other systems and services, including justice, health and poverty reduction.

An emerging approach within systems planning is to identify a specific organization to act as the lead "systems planner" organization in the areas of strategic planning and program administration.

Prevention

In communities across Canada, local responses to homelessness have typically focused on emergency service provision. In recent years however, there has been an effort to shift resources and funding to incorporate homelessness prevention practices into local housing strategies.

In 2017, the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness outlined three major forms of homelessness prevention:

1. Primary Prevention

These strategies involve working on structural barriers (e.g. poverty and lack of affordable housing options) that may cause a household to experience homelessness and can include poverty reduction measures and ensuring that all households have access to affordable housing that meets their needs within the community.

2. Secondary Prevention

These strategies involve identifying households who are at imminent risk of experiencing homelessness and then providing intervention measures and necessary supports to stabilize their housing and keep the household from experiencing homelessness. These strategies can include rent supplements for low-income and vulnerable households to maintain housing and one-time forgivable loans that may support households who are not able to make a rent payment.

3. Tertiary Prevention

These strategies involve supporting people who have experienced homelessness to decrease the likelihood they will enter into homelessness again and to mitigate any negative impacts that may have been caused by the experience of homelessness. These strategies break the cycle of homelessness and can involve housing search support and dealing with physical and mental health concerns that may have led to or been worsened during experiences of homelessness.

Prevention also involves coordinating local outreach and intake processes to help families and individuals move through a crisis quickly. The goal of this type of service coordination is the reduction of the type of barriers that often prevent individuals and families from successfully navigating local services and accessing critical supports before a crisis deepens.

Education and Awareness

Public perception regarding homelessness can be a significant barrier to a community's ability to increase the supply of supportive housing and services for residents experiencing homelessness. Especially in suburban communities, the lack of visible homelessness can often create a misperception that homelessness does not exist. Community opposition to the development of supportive housing for people experiencing homelessness can be the result of misunderstanding and fear that the presence of future tenants may cause increases in crime and safety concerns and decreases in surrounding property values.

Local research shows that neighbourhood crime and property values are not negatively affected by proximity to supportive housing sites. Monitoring supportive housing sites after development and publishing findings can help to educate community members on the positive effects of this type of housing. Continuing to share these research reports and having in-person meetings with community members may also help to better address any public concerns at the initial stages of future projects as well as improve relationships with neighbours.

Public education and awareness about experiences of homelessness and the benefits of supportive housing and services can lead to the creation of a more liveable and inclusive community. Advocacy groups often include perspectives of people with lived experience, which is proven to be a powerful tool. Some examples are sharing stories of experiences of homelessness through social media and news campaigns and supporting the production of art installation and theatre plays that are developed by people with lived experience. These activities can help residents understand the difficulties associated with homelessness and create a more inclusive and accepting community.

As with any change in public perception, creating a culture of inclusiveness takes time. It requires a multifaceted approach, involving many stakeholders including local governments, health authorities, school boards, the non-profit and private sector, and community and faith-based organizations.

5. STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

The Homelessness Strategy 2019–2029 sets out 5 strategic directions and 32 recommended actions to be completed over a 10 year period to respond to the needs of vulnerable Richmond residents that are at risk or are experiencing homelessness. Homelessness is complex and each person's experience of homelessness is unique. Therefore, solutions and actions to address homelessness need to be individualized and adaptable to changing needs over time. The Homelessness Strategy 2019–2029 is centered on a partnership approach and includes actions that will allow for continuous evolution and responsiveness to homelessness in Richmond. The recommended actions build upon ongoing initiatives and work that has been accomplished to date, consider current and emerging needs, and seek to foster collaboration and cooperation among stakeholders.

The vision for the Homelessness Strategy 2019–2029 is:

> *"By 2029, homelessness in Richmond will be rare, brief and non-recurring. Richmond is an inclusive community that works in collaboration to provide a continuum of housing and support services".*

The Homelessness Strategy 2019–2029 includes 5 strategic directions to guide this vision:

1. Prevent pathways into homelessness;

2. Support residents who are experiencing homelessness;

3. Provide pathways out of homelessness;

4. Foster collaboration among community partners; and

5. Communicate, research and monitor homelessness.

Actions for Implementation

Over the 10 year time frame for the Homelessness Strategy 2019–2029, the recommended actions have been identified as short-term (1–3 years), medium-term (4–6 years), long-term (7–10 years) or ongoing. Seven actions have been identified as priorities. It is important to acknowledge that while the strategic framework covers a 10 year period, some actions may require adaption to respond to changing needs or opportunities as they arise.

Strategic Direction 1:
Prevent pathways into homelessness

In recent years there has been an effort to shift resources and funding to incorporate homelessness prevention practices into local housing strategies. For example, eviction prevention programs and education programs for market landlords can support housing stability for low-income households. Prevention-related programs can include coordinating local outreach and intake processes to help families and individuals access available supports (i.e. rent subsidies) and move through a crisis quickly. The goal of this type of service coordination is the reduction of barriers that often prevent individuals and families from successfully navigating local services and accessing critical supports before the crisis deepens. From a municipal standpoint, the role of the City is to ensure that the right mix of affordable housing options are available to meet the housing needs of vulnerable residents and to facilitate collaboration among community partners to develop prevention services.

1. Continue to create affordable housing rental options across the housing continuum. **(Ongoing, PRIORITY)**

Ensuring the right mix of affordable housing options are available to meet the needs of vulnerable residents can prevent people from experiencing homelessness. In line with the City's Affordable Housing Strategy 2017–2027 and the Market Rental Policy, the City, in partnership with senior levels of government and the private and non-profit sectors, will continue to secure a range of housing options, with an emphasis on developing housing for vulnerable residents who are at risk of experiencing homelessness. Regular reviews of land acquisition needs will also help the City to capitalize on partnership opportunities with the private and non-market sectors regarding the development of affordable housing. Staff will continue to support non-profit-driven affordable housing developments through the development application process.

2. Facilitate the creation of a collaborative homeless prevention program in Richmond. **(Short-term: 1–3 years)**

Experiences of homelessness are unique and can occur abruptly. A collaborative homeless prevention program will limit experiences of episodic homelessness in Richmond. The creation of this program will benefit from alignment with both provincial and senior funding opportunities available from homeless prevention, and may include a Rent Bank, landlord education and relationship-building building initiatives, and active case management for individuals with more complex needs.

3. Work with Vancouver Coastal Health and other community partners to explore opportunities to enhance wrap-around supports to increase housing stability. **(Ongoing)**

While supportive housing residents have access to wrap-around services, such as health and wellness supports, employment referrals, and life skills training, residents in other types of housing are often more isolated or lack knowledge about supports available in the community. Mobile supports, such as low barrier physical and mental health in-reach services, can assist individuals in meeting residents' daily needs and maintaining housing stability.

4. Explore solutions for discharge planning practices for individuals leaving Richmond-based institutions. **(Medium-term: 4–6 years)**

Without proper discharge planning, people leaving institutions, including hospitals, corrections, or addiction treatment and mental health facilities, can quickly experience homelessness. Through this action, the City together with community partners will coordinate the review of discharge planning with Vancouver Coastal Health and non-profit housing providers to help ensure that people are prepared to live independently in a non-institutional setting and are able to access appropriate, stable housing, primary health care and other supports necessary for recovery.

Strategic Direction 2:
Support residents who are experiencing homelessness

Homelessness prevention programs unfortunately will not be able to prevent all experiences of homelessness. As each experience of homelessness is unique, it is important for a community to have a variety of services to respond to the needs of each client. Homelessness serving agencies have an important role in supporting residents by providing compassionate, non-judgmental services that work to support people and to create stability within their lives. The City's role within these actions is to facilitate partnerships and collaboration among service providers.

1. Ensure accurate and up-to-date information on supportive services is available. **(Short-term: 1–3 years)**

Providing information on how to access specific supports is the foundation for efficient service referral and navigation. A regularly updated inventory of supportive services will provide residents experiencing homelessness and non-profit services providers with up-to-date knowledge of existing and emerging community assets. The City and its partners will also work to improve system navigation for services and supports.

2. Coordinate a Front-line Service Provider Working Group to focus on coordination of supports for individuals experiencing homelessness or at risk of experiencing homelessness. **(Short-term: 1–3 years)**

It is important for service providers and outreach workers from various agencies to work together to share client-specific challenges, develop common understanding of services being provided throughout the community, and help facilitate service referrals between agencies and systems. This working group will consist of representatives from various community organizations involved in outreach in Richmond.

3. Secure permanent space and sustainable operating funding for an enhanced drop-in program for individuals experiencing or at-risk of homelessness. **(Short-term: 1–3 years, PRIORITY)**

Drop-in programs provide safe spaces for people experiencing homelessness to access social connection and services including meals, programming, referrals to housing and supports. Currently, the Richmond drop-in program does not have security of tenure or an optimal space to provide all required programming

(e.g. enhanced meals, shower, laundry, mail delivery and storage solutions for personal belongings, including government issued identification). The City will work in collaboration with community partners to secure adequate space required to provide enhanced programming for individuals experiencing homelessness.

4. Enhance coordination of food programs and outreach for residents experiencing homelessness. **(Ongoing)**

Food is an important way that people experiencing homelessness access nutrition and social connection. Social service and faith-based organizations provide access to food through a number of community meals, Food Bank programs and mobile food outreach. Coordination among food providers and an updated inventory of meal programming is necessary to ensure that people experiencing homelessness have options to access daily nutrition in ways that meet their individual needs.

5. Advocate to senior levels of government to secure funding for the Extreme Weather Response Program or a Winter Shelter. **(Short-term: 1–3 years)**

BC Housing provides funding to communities throughout the province to host Extreme Weather Response Shelters during the winter months. These shelters are only activated on nights when weather is deemed severe enough to present a substantial threat to the health of persons who are living outdoors and are typically closed during day-time hours. In contrast, Winter Shelters provide 24 hour shelter during the winter months, so that people living outside are given the option of sleeping indoors during the winter, regardless of the severity of conditions. Richmond requires long-term funding to ensure that residents experiencing homelessness have the opportunity to access shelter during extreme weather.

6. Monitor outreach services available in the community and advocate to senior levels of government for additional resources as needed. **(Ongoing)**

Outreach workers engage with people experiencing homelessness to establish meaningful relationships, determine needs and develop individualized action plans to meet client goals. Engaging with an outreach worker is often the first-step that a person experiencing homelessness makes before accessing supportive services and transitioning into housing. Therefore, it is necessary to ensure that the appropriate outreach resources are available.

7. Explore the use of City spaces as Warming Centres. **(Short-term: 1–3 years)**

Warming Centres provide safe, warm and non-judgmental spaces for people experiencing homelessness to find temporary shelter during periods of extreme weather. Unlike Extreme Weather Response or Winter Shelters, Warming Centres do not provide sleeping mats, but may be open during day or nighttime hours and typically provide snacks. Additional resources would likely be required to operate Warming Centres and will need to be considered when exploring this additional programing in City facilities.

8. Dedicate appropriate resources in order to enhance service provision at City facilities for individuals experiencing homelessness. **(Ongoing)**

People experiencing homelessness continue to seek services provided at City community facilities, including public libraries and community centres. Working to enhance service provision for people experiencing homelessness will help to ensure that City facilities remain inclusive and provide opportunities for healthy, active living for all Richmond residents. In order to achieve this action, additional or reallocated resources would likely be required in City facilities to support new service provision. Staff will also consider implementing enhanced procedures to ensure community centres remain inclusive and accessible places for all residents.

9. Continue to refine the City's approach to responding to individuals experiencing homelessness on City-owned property. **(Ongoing)**

The City will take an appropriate, compassionate, and consistent approach to meeting the needs of individuals experiencing homelessness on City-owned property. The City will work in partnership with local health and service providers to enhance outreach and referral supports for these individuals, while ensuring that City-owned property, including public parks, remain clean and safe for all community residents.

10. Explore opportunities to address storage needs for people experiencing homelessness. **(Medium-term: 4–6 years)**

Lack of storage is a challenge for individuals experiencing homelessness, as they have no safe space for personal and sentimental items. Experiencing removal of personal belonging negatively impacts a person experiencing homelessness and can create additional barriers to people trying to stabilize their lives. Working together with community partners to improve processes and communication practices related to the removal and storage of personal belonging may improve peoples' experiences of homelessness.

11. Create shelter and transitional beds for youth experiencing homelessness in the community. **(Short-term: 1–3 years)**

Currently, shelter and wraparound support services for youth (14–24 years) are accessible only in surrounding municipalities. Therefore, many youth who experience homelessness, including youth ageing out of care, in Richmond are required to leave the community and support network to access needed services. Staff will work with the Richmond School District and other key stakeholders, to develop a working group and action plan for how to create youth shelter and transitional options, as these services will help youth transition into stable longer-term housing options, while staying connected to their community.

12. Explore opportunities to address the need for culturally-appropriate supports, services, and housing for people experiencing homelessness. **(Ongoing)**

People who identify as Indigenous are overrepresented in the local and regional homeless population and often require culturally specific services to stabilize their lives. In addition, there are a number of other groups (e.g. seniors and members of the LGBTQ2S community) that may benefit from adaptive and culturally specific housing and supportive services. It is important to explore opportunities to develop new services and training of existing service providers to enhance their service delivery for specific groups who are experiencing homelessness.

Strategic Direction 3:
Provide pathways out of homelessness

Individuals experiencing homelessness are better able to move forward with their lives if they are first housed then provided with services and supports. Various models, including Housing First and supportive housing, supplement housing units with supports related to physical and mental health, education, employment, or substance abuse. The City's role within these actions is to support service provider organizations in coordinating service delivery, and to advocate to the provincial and federal governments for increased funding for affordable housing in Richmond.

1. **Enhance the existing coordinated access and referral system in Richmond. (Medium-term: 4–6 years)**

A standardized intake and assessment process for linking individuals with housing and supports is an essential element of efforts to prevent and address homelessness. The City will work with service providers to review existing coordinated access systems to ensure they are effective for both organizations and clients.

2. **Work with service providers to create a Supportive Housing Action Plan. (Short-term: 1–3 years)**

While there is general consensus in the community that additional supportive housing units are needed in Richmond, further work is required to identify the specific housing types and number of units required. The Action Plan will enable collaborative planning to increase the supply of supportive housing, and will be used to inform future advocacy efforts with provincial and federal governments.

3. **Explore the potential of creating a Housing First program in Richmond. (Short-term: 1–3 years)**

Richmond's low vacancy rate and increasing rental costs make it especially challenging for people experiencing homelessness to access stable and long term housing options. The establishment of a Housing First Program, managed by non-profit housing providers with dedicated affordable housing units would allow homeless-serving organizations to quickly access housing options for their clients.

4. **Secure funding and a permanent site for supportive housing in Richmond. (Short-term: 1–3 years, PRIORITY)**

Permanent supportive housing is an effective option to house and support clients who are experiencing chronic or episodic homelessness, as they may require more intensive and specialized types of supports. Supportive housing remains a critical need in Richmond. A permanent site for supportive housing needs to be secured. City staff will work with BC Housing and a selected non-profit housing provider to secure funding for the development of the site and the required wrap around supports.

5. Ensure that emergency housing services focus on achieving long term housing options. **(Ongoing)**

Accessing services is the first step people who are experiencing homelessness take when starting to stabilize their lives. It is important that non-profit organizations that provide emergency services (e.g. emergency shelter and drop-in programs) work in collaboration with one another to connect clients with the correct services, including housing search support. Supportive services, including life skills and employment training, and addictions and mental health resources may help to break the cycle of homelessness.

Strategic Direction 4:
Foster collaboration among community partners

Homelessness is a complex issue, and cannot be solved by one organization or one level of government alone. Collaboration and service coordination is the most efficient and cost effective way to meet the needs of people experiencing homelessness and to build capacity within the non-profit sector to provide enhanced service provision. The role of the City within this strategic direction is to facilitate and support collaboration among non-profit housing and services providers to address agreed upon actions.

1. Dedicate appropriate staff resources for homelessness service coordination at the City of Richmond. **(Short-term: 1–3 years, PRIORITY)**

Dedicated staff and resources are required to support the continued implementation of the actions within the Homelessness Strategy 2019–2029. The Richmond non-profit community has stated the need for an individual to coordinate homelessness initiatives among stakeholders. A dedicated City position (i.e. Homelessness Services Coordinator) would benefit the community by liaising with community partners to facilitate service coordination and systems-level planning.

2. Develop a Community Homelessness Table for collaboration among agencies working to prevent or addressing homelessness. **(Short-term: 1–3 years, PRIORITY)**

The Community Homelessness Table will play an important role in guiding the implementation of the Homeless Strategy. The table will build on the strengths of the various organizations, promote collaboration, foster innovation, and encourage ongoing learning amongst local organizations. The table will continue to advocate to the provincial and federal governments on behalf of the community, and explore opportunities to enhance existing programs and services in the community.

3. Engage with residents with lived experience when designing and implementing significant policies or programs related to addressing homelessness in Richmond. **(Ongoing)**

Individuals with lived experience related to homelessness are a valuable source of information regarding issues and solutions for addressing homelessness. Individuals with this perspective, when appropriate, will be included as key stakeholders during engagement processes for new policies and programs related

to addressing homelessness. Engagement efforts should value the time of people with lived experience and work to foster relationships between people with lived experience and other stakeholders.

4. Continue the annual Health, Social and Safety Grants to support local homelessness services. **(Ongoing)**

Annually, the City provides Health, Social and Safety Grants for local non-profit organizations to increase organizational capacity and enhance current program services. A number of these grants support homelessness services that work to enhance the health and wellbeing of Richmond residents experiencing homelessness.

5. Monitor and pursue funding opportunities for support services for residents at-risk or experiencing homelessness. **(Ongoing)**

The City will continue to monitor funding available through provincial and federal programs, including Reaching Home – Canada's Homelessness Strategy, as well as non-profit and philanthropic funding sources, and pursue funding opportunities for support services for residents at-risk or experiencing homelessness. In addition, the City will disseminate funding information to community partners.

Strategic Direction 5:
Communicate, research and monitor homelessness

Richmond is committed to fostering an inclusive and healthy community. Public perception can be a significant barrier to a community's ability to provide critical supportive housing and services for residents experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Positive changes in public perceptions regarding homelessness can help people experiencing homelessness in the community feel accepted, safe and supported. The City's main role is to help facilitate awareness and education opportunities regarding homelessness and supportive services, and to trade information.

1. Implement a local data system to track trends and the changing needs of individuals experiencing homelessness. **(Short-term: 1–3 years)**

A local data system will supplement the point-in-time data provided by the Metro Vancouver Homeless Count with more detailed statistics regarding homelessness in Richmond. This tool will enable the development of more effective programs and projects that meet the needs of Richmond residents experiencing homelessness.

2. Provide training regarding homelessness service provision to City and community partner staff working in City facilities. **(Short-term: 1–3 years)**

People experiencing homelessness are increasingly seeking programming and support at City facilities. Training of staff at City facilities (i.e. libraries and community centres), Parks, Community Bylaws, Fire Rescue and RCMP will support enhanced service provision for Richmond residents experiencing homelessness. This training should include education about homelessness and poverty, skills to interact with persons experiencing homelessness (including persons experiencing mental health and addictions challenges), and an understanding of self-care for frontline workers.

3. Raise awareness and educate the community of the factors contributing to homelessness and the benefits of affordable housing and supportive services. **(Short-term: 1–3 years, PRIORITY)**

A communications strategy, including public awareness events regarding housing and homelessness will provide an opportunity for residents to learn about and discuss housing affordability and homelessness issues in the community and help to destigmatize experiences of homelessness. In addition, awareness training will assist in educating the community on the benefits of supporting vulnerable residents. Awareness activities would benefit from the perspectives of people with lived experience to ensure that their voices are included in community dialogue and to provide local context to experiences of homelessness. Continuing to research best and emerging practices related to public education will help ensure that communication is effective and adaptive to any cultural shifts.

4. Work with community partners to ensure volunteer opportunities are communicated to the public. **(Ongoing)**

Many services provided for people at risk of experiencing homelessness and delivered by social services and faith-based organizations in Richmond are supported by dedicated volunteers. Richmond continues to be a caring and inclusive community and many residents are interested in meaningful volunteer opportunities. A local database of volunteer opportunities will provide information to interested members of the public and will continue to help build capacity for Richmond social service sector.

5. Advocate to senior governments regarding the changing needs of homelessness in Richmond and the need for additional funding. **(Ongoing, PRIORITY)**

Richmond requires additional funding to support program and project development for residents who are experiencing homelessness. The City will continue to advocate to senior levels of government to request funding and resources to meet the housing and homelessness services need of Richmond residents and to build awareness of the homelessness needs in Richmond.

6. Report out annually on the progress of the Homelessness Strategy 2019–2029. **(Ongoing)**

Presenting annual update reports to City Council will ensure that the Strategy's actions are being addressed and will provide a transparent and public record of ongoing progress made. Annual reporting will also provide opportunities to refine the Strategy as appropriate to respond to the changing homelessness needs in the community.

6. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The performance measures and targets defined below are intended to guide the ongoing evaluation of the Homelessness Strategy 2019–2029 and to monitor if experiences of homelessness are rare, brief and non-recurring in Richmond by 2029. The measures will be used to monitor the effectiveness of the Strategy as a whole, as well as the impact of specific projects and programs. Additional or revised measures may be developed as determined by City staff and the Leadership Table.

Table 1: City of Richmond Homelessness Strategy 2019–2029 Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

Strategic Direction	Performance Measure	Target
Prevent pathways into homelessness	Percentage of individuals receiving support from homeless prevention programs who are still housed three months after program intervention.	90% of all program clients by 2029.
Support residents who are experiencing homelessness	Number of individuals turned away from emergency shelters due to insufficient capacity.	Zero individuals turned away annually by 2029.
	Percentage of shelter clients who are referred to appropriate housing options within 30 days.	100% of shelter clients are referred to housing options within 30 days by 2029.
Provide pathways out of homelessness	Number of individuals who are experiencing chronic homelessness (individuals without permanent shelter for one year or longer) in Richmond.	Zero individuals experiencing chronic homelessness by 2029.
	Number of long-term supportive housing units created for individuals experiencing homelessness.	100 long-term units by 2029.
Foster collaboration and capacity-building among community partners	Number of Leadership Table members satisfied with the Table (to be collected through annual membership surveys).	Average membership rating 4 out of 5 on an annual basis.
Communicate, research and monitor the needs of Richmond residents experiencing homelessness	Percentage of front line workers in City facilities and services who have participated in homelessness awareness training.	85% by 2025.

7. NEXT STEPS

Moving forward, the City will work with community stakeholders to undertake the recommended actions outlined within the Homelessness Strategy 2019–2029. An immediate priority is creating the Leadership Table to build support amongst local stakeholders to guide the implementation of the Strategy. Other short-term actions include promoting the Strategy and its actions to the provincial and federal governments, Metro Vancouver, and other key stakeholders. On an ongoing basis, the City will monitor the progress and performance of the Homelessness Strategy 2019–2029.

8. CONCLUSION

There are many factors that may lead someone to experience homelessness. These can include lack of adequate income, access to affordable housing options and medical services, experiences of discrimination, traumatic events and personal crisis, physical health problems, disability or mental health concerns.

The City of Richmond is committed to playing a proactive leadership role to facilitate solutions to homelessness in partnership with a wide range of community stakeholders. The Homelessness Strategy 2019–2029 will be the guiding document to further the goal of making experiences of homelessness in Richmond rare, brief and non-recurring. The Homelessness Strategy 2019–2029 identifies partnerships with senior governments and the private and non-profit sector to accomplish the recommended actions set out in its Implementation Plan. Dedicated resources, including City staff time and financial contributions will also be required to meet the needs of Richmond residents experiencing homelessness and to implement the Homelessness Strategy 2019–2029.

With involvement from all sectors—public, non-profit, and the private sector—all Richmond residents experiencing homelessness can receive the supports and housing options necessary to achieve stability in their lives.