



City of Richmond

**2021–2031  
Collaborative  
Action Plan to  
Reduce and  
Prevent Poverty  
in Richmond**

**Highlights from  
2022–2023**

Community Social  
Development  
Department









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# Introduction

Poverty, and the circumstances that lead to it, is complex. It can be defined as “the condition of a person who is deprived of the resources, means, choices and power necessary to acquire and maintain a basic living standard needed to promote and facilitate integration and participation in society.”<sup>1</sup> Poverty affects different households in different ways and extends beyond a lack of financial resources to also include lack of access to opportunities and issues of inequity. It can also influence or limit the ability of individuals or families to participate in different aspects of community life (social, cultural, political, economic and recreational).

The recent global increase in the cost of food, gas and housing, in addition to inflation, has increased financial pressure on households across Canada resulting in growing numbers of people seeking support to meet basic needs. Strategic and coordinated action from all sectors is required to prevent more households from experiencing poverty. The City of Richmond recognizes that local governments have a role to play in addressing poverty and is committed to collaborating with community organizations and senior levels of government towards this goal.

In 2020, the City of Richmond received a grant from the Province of BC’s Poverty Reduction Planning and Action Program, administered by the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM). The purpose of the grant was to support the development of the City’s first poverty reduction plan. Significant community engagement with both community partner organizations and residents, including residents with lived and living experience, shed light on the barriers faced by residents at risk of or living in poverty. This feedback emphasized challenges in meeting basic needs, barriers to accessing a range of supportive programs and services, and the related impact on sense of belonging and inclusion in the community. These findings informed the development of a collaborative plan of action.

This document is the initial progress update on the first two years of implementation of the 2021–2031 Collaborative Action Plan to Reduce and Prevent Poverty in Richmond. In addition to reporting achievements and highlights, it is also a tool for the City, partner organizations, service providers and community members to identify future collaborative opportunities to reduce and prevent poverty in Richmond.

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1 Employment and Social Development Canada (2018). [Opportunity for All – Canada’s First Poverty Reduction Strategy](#).



# About the Collaborative Action Plan

On December 6, 2021, City Council adopted the 2021–2031 Collaborative Action Plan to Reduce and Prevent Poverty in Richmond (Collaborative Action Plan) to guide the City’s long-term approach to working with the community to reduce and prevent poverty in Richmond.

The Collaborative Action Plan identifies four strategic directions comprised of 26 actions to be implemented collaboratively over a ten-year timeframe. The strategic directions are:

- **Strategic Direction 1:** Prevent and Reduce Poverty
- **Strategic Direction 2:** Support Residents at Risk of or Living in Poverty
- **Strategic Direction 3:** Increase Awareness and Educate
- **Strategic Direction 4:** Research, Monitor and Evaluate

## Alignment with Other City Strategies

To facilitate a comprehensive approach to poverty reduction and prevention, the strategic directions and actions outlined in the Collaborative Action Plan align with and build upon other City strategies and plans that address key areas related to poverty reduction and prevention, including:

- Richmond 2041 Official Community Plan (OCP)
- Building Our Social Future: A Social Development Strategy for Richmond 2013–2022
- City of Richmond Community Wellness Strategy 2018–2023
- Community Energy and Emissions Plan (CEEP) 2050
- City of Richmond Seniors Strategy 2022–2032
- City of Richmond Youth Strategy 2022–2032
- City of Richmond Cultural Harmony Plan 2019–2029
- City of Richmond Affordable Housing Strategy 2017–2027
- City of Richmond Homelessness Strategy 2019–2029
- 2017–2022 Richmond Child Care Needs Assessment and Strategy (strategy update in progress)
- ArtWorks: Richmond Arts Strategy 2019–2024
- City of Richmond Recreation and Sport Strategy 2019–2024



# Rapidly Changing Context

Impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic together with increased costs of living and rising inflation have meant more households across the country are struggling to meet basic needs.

## Impacts on Poverty Since COVID-19

The Collaborative Action Plan was adopted in late 2021, before the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on lower income households were well understood. The pandemic disproportionately affected low-wage workers who faced increased job losses, reduced income and slower employment recovery, in comparison with higher-paid workers.<sup>2</sup> This especially impacted workers who were employed in frontline occupations in the accommodation, care and retail sectors, many of whom were racialized individuals.<sup>2, 3, 4</sup> A slower employment recovery rate was also experienced by workers who had less than a bachelor-level of post secondary education.<sup>5</sup> These employment and income losses exacerbated precarious situations of individuals who were at risk of or living in poverty. Of the 2023 Homeless Count respondents from across Greater Vancouver who reported losing their housing in the past three years, 15% identified the COVID-19 pandemic as a reason for their most recent housing loss.<sup>6</sup>

Effects of the pandemic combined with the recent cost of living increases have resulted in more households facing affordability issues, even those that do not fall below the poverty line. A recent Statistics Canada report noted that in 2022, about four in five families facing food insecurity had household incomes above the poverty line.<sup>7</sup> In 2023, 27% of Canadians reported that it was very difficult to meet necessary expenses such as transportation, housing, food and clothing.<sup>8</sup> The 2023 National Advisory Council on Poverty annual report identified that recent increases in costs of living represent one of the most important socioeconomic challenges faced by people living in Canada following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, and it is expected that increasing unaffordability will cause poverty rates to trend upwards.<sup>9</sup>

## Richmond Context

Collaborative efforts to work towards poverty reduction and prevention require a common understanding of the context of poverty in Richmond. This section provides an overview of poverty indicators and community trends based on local data.

### Prevalence of Low Income

Prevalence of low income refers to the percentage of a population that falls below an identified income threshold. While poverty is influenced by a number of factors, at the most fundamental level, households experiencing poverty lack the income and resources needed to meet a basic standard of living. While income-based data has limitations, it is one of the most consistent measures available for Richmond and is used nationally and internationally as an indicator for poverty.

2 Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, BC Office (2021). [Working for a Living Wage: 2021 Update](#).

3 National Advisory Council on Poverty (2023). [Blueprint for Transformation: The 2023 Report of the National Advisory Council on Poverty](#).

4 Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (2021). [A Disproportionate Burden: COVID-19 labour market impacts on Indigenous and racialized workers in Canada](#).

5 Statistics Canada (2023). [Changes in income across different levels of educational attainment during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic](#).

6 Homelessness Services Association of BC (2023). [2023 Homeless Count in Greater Vancouver](#).

7 Statistics Canada (2023). [Food insecurity among Canadian families](#).

8 Statistics Canada (2023). [Difficulty meeting financial needs, by gender and other selected sociodemographic characteristics \[Table 45-10-0087-01\]](#).

9 National Advisory Council on Poverty (2023). [Blueprint for Transformation: The 2023 Report of the National Advisory Council on Poverty](#).



The Market Basket Measure (MBM) was adopted as Canada’s Official Poverty Line in 2019, and considers an individual to live in poverty if their disposable income is insufficient to purchase a predetermined basket of goods and services required to achieve a modest, basic standard of living. Since its adoption, the MBM has undergone comprehensive reviews and continuous updates to refine the methodology to be applicable regionally across Canada. Based on the 2021 Census, the prevalence of poverty according to the MBM in Richmond was 14.4%, which was 3% higher than the regional rate of 11.2% across Greater Vancouver.

In lieu of regular MBM threshold updates, the City has referenced the Low Income Measure After-Tax (LIM-AT), a relative measure of low income status based on 50% of the median after tax income of households. Based on the 2021 Census, the prevalence of low income in Richmond decreased to 15.9% (LIM-AT) from 22.2% in 2016. However, this decrease was largely attributed to pandemic income replacement benefits, such as the Canadian Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) that provided a temporary boost to income levels for some lower socioeconomic households. As the benefit has not continued, the resulting effect is likely temporary.<sup>10</sup>

**Table 1: Richmond Residents Living in Poverty Based on the LIM-AT, 2016 compared with 2021 Census**

	2016	2021
Total number of residents	198,309	208,395
Below LIM-AT	44,040	33,225
% Below LIM-AT	22.2%	15.9%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 and 2021 Census of Population.

While data based on reported income provides one measure of poverty levels in the community, it does not provide a complete picture. Instead, it is best used as an initial reference point supplemented with community-based data to provide a better understanding of the local context.



<sup>10</sup> Tamarack Institute (2023). [Communities Ending Poverty Impact Report: A Deep Dive into 2022](#).



## Community Trends

Trends in community data suggest that the positive effects of pandemic-related financial assistance were temporary. Data from multiple sources indicates that there is a growing number of Richmond residents accessing supports to meet basic needs. When possible, data from 2021 has been provided for comparison as a baseline indicator.

- The average number of households in Richmond on the BC Housing Applicant Registry rose by approximately 500 households, to 1,556 households in 2023, up from 1,074 households in 2021.
- The average number of Richmond households supported by BC Income and Disability Assistance grew by over 500 households, to 3,432 households in 2023, up from 2,913 households in 2021.
- Increases in BC Income and Disability Assistance cases in Richmond were seen among all household types (singles, couples and families with children), with the bulk of the increase due to a rise in Income Assistance cases (375 households).
- The average number of individuals in Richmond with no fixed address receiving BC Income and Disability Assistance increased by almost 100 cases, to 202 cases in 2023, up from 106 cases in 2021.
- The number of Richmond residents counted in the Metro Vancouver Homeless Count almost doubled, growing to 162 individuals in 2023, up from 85 individuals in 2020.
- 13% of Richmond residents participating in the 2023 Homeless Count reported earning income through full-time (6%) or part-time (7%) employment.
- The total number of households supported by the Richmond Food Bank more than doubled, growing to 4,770 households in 2023, up from 2,173 households in 2021.

Other indicators from programs delivered by the City and in partnership with Community Associations and Societies and Richmond Public Library (RPL), also reinforce similar trends of more residents seeking community supports.

- The number and dollar amount of Health, Social and Safety Grants disbursed to support emergency food programs increased by approximately \$32,000 to 7 organizations that received \$111,895 in 2023, up from 5 organizations that received \$79,433 in 2021.
- The number of Richmond residents enrolled in the City of Richmond's Recreation Fee Subsidy Program continued to grow, with 2,984 participants enrolled in the 2022–2023 program year, up from 1,992 participants in the 2021–2022 program year.
- Over 1,000 community members sought community resources and services through the Community Services Pop Ups' first year of implementation (December 2022 to December 2023).



# Roles and Responsibilities in Poverty Reduction

Experiences of poverty are influenced by a broad range of social and economic conditions that occur at the community, regional and national levels. As a result, all three levels of government, community organizations and individuals have roles to play in creating systems and environments that work to effectively reduce and prevent poverty in communities.

## The Government of Canada

The Government of Canada plays a central role in addressing and alleviating conditions of poverty in Canada. The federal government has responsibility for many of the broader macro-economic policies and social programs that affect the well-being of Canadians. This includes programs related to child and family well-being, such as the Canada Child Benefit, and employment-related policies and programs, such as the delivery of Canada's Employment Insurance programs. The federal government also provides funding transfers to provincial governments in key areas such as health care and child care, and provides funding to municipalities and community service organizations for projects and programs that align with federal priorities. Additionally, various federal agencies work closely with municipalities on areas of mutual concern, such as affordable housing that affect persons at risk of or living in poverty (e.g. Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation).



## The Province of BC

The provincial government (the Province) has jurisdiction over a broad range of social policy areas that include health care, education and welfare. It furthers its social development mandate through the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction, which administers BC Income and Disability Assistance programs that provide social assistance for basic needs. The Province also funds service provision through health authorities, crown agencies (e.g. BC Housing), and contracts and grants with non-profit organizations. Additionally, the Province provides short-term funding to municipalities, school districts and other governmental organizations to advance provincial priorities, such as the 3-year UBCM Poverty Reduction Planning and Action Grants, and the Feeding Futures fund to enhance access to nutritious food in schools.

## The City of Richmond

Local governments are uniquely positioned to understand the needs of those who live in their community. The City of Richmond (the City) is committed to working with senior levels of government and the public and non-profit sectors to address the needs of residents at risk of or living in poverty. The City utilizes its planning and regulatory powers to advance actions that support increased affordability and livability in the community, such as the development of affordable housing and the provision of child care amenities. The City also works to address the specific needs within the community by:

- Working with community-based organizations to advocate to senior levels of government for resources, programs and funding;
- Sharing best practice research with the community to increase awareness and education about the need for increased inclusion for all residents, regardless of socioeconomic standing;
- Analyzing data on community needs to create policy and implement actions that support residents at risk of or living in poverty;
- Delivering programs and services, including poverty reduction initiatives, within the City's mandate;
- Developing and implementing initiatives in collaboration with community-based organizations that respond to the needs of residents at risk of or living in poverty; and
- Assisting non-profit community service organizations by facilitating collaboration, enabling capacity building, and providing financial and in-kind supports (e.g. program space).

## Community Associations and Societies

The City works with Community Associations and Societies to provide recreation, sport, arts, culture and heritage opportunities to all Richmond residents. The City provides the facilities and core staffing, and most of the Community Associations and Societies are responsible for the delivery of programs and events. The City and the Community Associations and Societies aim to provide programs that are inclusive and remove barriers to participation so all residents can participate. This includes offering a range of free and low-cost programs and opportunities. Community Associations and Societies also partner with the City to offer the Recreation Fee Subsidy Program (RFSP) for those with low incomes. Through the RFSP, participants receive financial support to participate in most registered and drop-in parks, recreation and cultural programs offered at City community facilities.

## Richmond Public Library

Public libraries promote literacy and lifelong learning, and provide a range of resources, programs and services that are accessible to everyone in the community. Richmond Public Library (RPL) is committed to poverty reduction, inclusion and being responsive to community needs. RPL provides barrier-free access to its services with no late fines for borrowed items. In addition to print materials, RPL's collection includes a



variety of activity kits that are free to borrow, and provides dedicated spaces to access and learn about digital technology. As well, RPL acts as a resource hub, working in partnership with community-based organizations to better connect residents with skill building opportunities and community resources.

## Community Service and Faith-based Organizations

Community service and faith-based organizations in Richmond play an integral role in advocating for and responding to the needs of families and individuals living in poverty in the community. These organizations provide critical services that respond to existing and emerging needs, and work collaboratively to break down barriers to ensure that all residents are able to access the services and supports they need. Examples include:

- Referrals to government programs, health care and mental health services;
- Supportive programming including life and employment training skills;
- Provision of emergency food supports, including community meals and food hampers;
- Owning and operating affordable housing units;
- Opportunities for social and community connection;
- Information and referral supports;
- Information on housing and education;
- Job skills training and career mentoring; and
- Support groups.



## Richmond School District

Schools play a significant role in supporting children and families experiencing poverty that goes beyond their fundamental purpose of providing education. Schools are important community hubs that help families build support systems and create connections in the community. They provide access to social and recreational opportunities that contribute to healthy child development and help connect children and families to resources in the broader community. The Richmond School District No. 38 also operates programs that ensure all children and youth have access to supplies, nutritious snacks and other basic necessities.

## Vancouver Coastal Health

Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) provides health care services through a network of hospitals, primary care clinics, community health centres and residential care. VCH is one of five regional health authorities that governs, plans and coordinates health services in BC. VCH also works with municipalities and community service organizations to employ a population health approach to improve the health of the entire population and to reduce health inequities among population groups by improving the social determinants of health in communities.

## Business Community

The business community plays an important role in reducing and preventing poverty. Members of the business community are both employers and often Richmond residents. Their decisions and actions have a direct impact on employment levels, labour and income, and overall quality of life in the community. Businesses also offer mentoring opportunities and assist with sponsorship of programs and events that help foster the full participation of all Richmond residents in the social, cultural, economic and political life of the city.

## Residents and Community Members

Residents and community members in Richmond play an important role in reducing and preventing poverty. Some community members volunteer to support programs, services and organizations that aim to prevent or reduce the impacts of poverty, while others take on an advocacy role to promote equitable access to basic needs for fellow residents. Importantly, residents with lived and living experience with poverty have insights to share on the challenges they face and can be vital resources for others in the community, especially when supports and opportunities are available to do so.

## Collaborations in the Community

Poverty prevention and reduction requires a community effort and is not the sole responsibility of one organization, sector or level of government. Richmond-based community organizations and public sector agencies, including the City of Richmond, are committed to working together on initiatives that contribute to preventing and reducing poverty in the community. The overview below provides a high-level snapshot of some of the important work being led by community partners in 2022 and 2023.

- **Social Services:** Richmond has over 45 non-profit community organizations, an active community of faith organizations and dedicated public sector agencies that continue to provide social services and lead a range of targeted initiatives to support populations that are at risk of or living in poverty. Key services that support poverty reduction include direct program delivery, resource navigation and individual support across population groups. This includes the provision of housing navigation services, addiction and recovery supports, mental health and wellness programs, and employment resources and upskilling programs. In addition to the ongoing work undertaken by these organizations to support vulnerable populations, several new initiatives have been introduced in the community since the plan was adopted. Since 2022, the City



has worked in partnership with Turning Point Recovery Society to operate the Brighthouse Pavilion Drop-in Centre and Shower Program. In the same year, S.U.C.C.E.S.S. and Vancouver Coastal Health piloted a bilingual (English and Chinese) community connectors program that assists vulnerable seniors to access community resources. In 2023, Richmond Cares, Richmond Gives introduced the provincially-funded Seniors Housing Information and Navigation Ease (SHINE) program.

- **Food Access:** The need for emergency food resources in Richmond has been increasing throughout 2022 and 2023, and the Food Aid Delivery Coalition, a network of primarily faith organizations, continued to provide community meals and food outreach to community members in need and those experiencing unsheltered homelessness. In 2023, the Richmond Food Bank began convening quarterly Richmond Food Coalition meetings to enable information sharing among community meal service providers and other community partners. It also began working with the City to update the No or Low Cost Community Meals and Food Programs brochure. A number of community organizations, including Vancouver Coastal Health, Richmond Food Bank, and Family Services of Greater Vancouver, continued to distribute BC Farmers' Market Nutrition Coupons to lower-income community members. These coupons supported the purchase of fresh vegetables and fruits at the Kwantlen Farmers' Market and Steveston Farmers' and Artisans Market. In 2023, Richmond School District No. 38 received Feeding Futures provincial funding to enhance school nutrition programs. Urban Bounty led a number of initiatives to improve food system equity, such as initial work to explore the development of a community food hub. As well, Urban Bounty oversaw the City's 15 community garden sites that were tended by over 760 Richmond residents. Subsidized garden plot rentals were available to those living on low income and to organizations delivering programs targeted to people at risk of poverty. A total of 19 garden plots were subsidized in 2022, with this number growing to 36 subsidized garden plots in 2023.
- **Employment:** A key element in poverty reduction efforts is to support people in achieving adequate incomes to meet their needs. Richmond has a range of organizations and agencies that deliver employment resources and programs for community members who may face barriers to finding and maintaining meaningful employment. These groups include persons with disabilities, youth, immigrants and newcomers, and people experiencing multiple barriers. Over the past two years, community organizations and employers across the community collaborated on the delivery of job fairs and hiring events, with support from WorkBC, Community Associations and Societies, Richmond Public Library, and the City. In 2023, a sub-committee of service providers was established through the City's Community Poverty Reduction and Prevention Table to explore collaborative actions to further improve access to employment resources for people at risk of or living in poverty.
- **Mental Health Services:** Poverty can influence mental health through increased stress, lack of access to basic needs and limited opportunities to access mental health care.<sup>11</sup> During engagement for the Collaborative Action Plan, increased access to mental health services emerged as a priority for Richmond residents at risk of or living in poverty. In the past two years, Richmond has gained two new assets in this area. Foundry Richmond, operated by Vancouver Coastal Health, opened a permanent location on Cooney Road in 2023. In addition, Richmond School District No. 38 and Vancouver Coastal Health collaborated on the implementation of the Integrated Child and Youth Team. Both facilitate access to mental health resources for children, youth and their families in Richmond through outreach or low barrier programming, and partnerships with community social service organizations.
- **Financial Assistance to Participate:** Richmond has a network of financial support programs to improve access to sport and physical activity opportunities, in addition to the Recreation Fee Subsidy Program delivered by the City and Community Associations and Societies. KidSport Richmond provided a total of \$280,000 in funding in 2022 and 2023 to Richmond children and youth from low-income families.

11 Public Health Agency of Canada. [canada.ca/content/dam/phac-aspc/documents/services/publications/science-research-data/health-inequalities-infographics/mental-health-inequalities-by-income-en.pdf](https://canada.ca/content/dam/phac-aspc/documents/services/publications/science-research-data/health-inequalities-infographics/mental-health-inequalities-by-income-en.pdf)

KidSport raises funds through private donations and grants, including the City’s Parks, Recreation and Community Events Grants. In 2023, the new Active Recreation and Sport Fund, administered by Richmond Sports Council with funding from the City, was introduced. As well, the Canadian Tire Jumpstart program continued to offer funding both for individuals and to support affordable programming in the community.

- **Awareness and Advocacy:** The Richmond Advocacy and Support Committee (RASC) supported citizen engagement of people with lived experience of poverty. RASC members assisted with participant recruitment for the 2023 BC SPEAK survey. RASC members also developed skills to advocate for the Vision Zero approach to traffic safety, with support from the Richmond Poverty Reduction Coalition (RPRC). RPRC is a collective of Richmond residents and agencies that raise awareness and advocate for social justice and equity on a number of policy topics to different levels of government. As well, the Food Access in Richmond (FAIR) committee, initiated in 2022 and supported by the Richmond Food Bank, is comprised of residents with lived experience of food insecurity. In June 2023, FAIR implemented a pilot community pantry which helped to raise awareness of the increasing need for food access in Richmond.

Over the course of the ten-year Collaborative Action Plan, the City is committed to continuing to cultivate collaborative actions together with community organizations to prevent and reduce poverty in Richmond.





# Progress on the Collaborative Action Plan

As the 2021–2031 Collaborative Action Plan to Reduce and Prevent Poverty in Richmond was adopted in December 2021, the highlights reported below are from the timeframe of January 2022 to December 2023. Appendix 1 outlines the current status of Collaborative Action Plan strategic actions.

## Strategic Direction 1: Reduce and Prevent Poverty

Poverty reduction and prevention means improving equitable access to the resources, means, choices and power needed for individuals to meet their immediate needs and to develop more financially stable futures. The City is committed to facilitating collective action with community organizations through ongoing conversations, information sharing and building social planning capacity.

Through implementation of Strategic Direction 1, the City aims to strengthen community capacity in Richmond to implement collaborative efforts to reduce and prevent poverty and increase participation and sense of belonging for community members at risk of or living in poverty.

### Achievements and Highlights

- On February 28, 2022, Council adopted the Terms of Reference for the Community Poverty Reduction and Prevention (CPRP) Table. This table was established to advance actions identified in the Collaborative Action Plan. The CPRP Table commenced in April 2022 and meets bi-monthly to strengthen the network of cross-sectoral organizations and to advance annual priorities through collaborative actions. Co-chaired by the City and Richmond Public Library (RPL), the CPRP Table is comprised of community non-profit organizations, cornerstone institutions such as Richmond School District No. 38, Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction, Vancouver Coastal Health, and Richmond residents. (*Action 1.1*)
- The City was a successful recipient of two Poverty Reduction Planning and Action Grants in 2022 and 2023, totalling \$100,000 in funding from the Province, administered by the Union of BC Municipalities. The intent of this provincial funding was to support local governments to implement initiatives that work to reduce poverty at the local level and to support the Province’s poverty reduction strategy, TogetherBC. These successful grants were used to implement an ongoing monthly drop-in program to connect residents at risk of or living in poverty to resources and supports, and develop a pilot peer-to-peer resource navigator program. (*Action 1.2*)
- In September 2023, a sub-committee of the CPRP Table was formed to increase work experience, mentorship and upskilling opportunities available in Richmond. Co-chaired by the City, Back in Motion, Pacific Autism Family Network and Turning Point Recovery Society, representatives from over ten community organizations have been collaborating to identify and implement initiatives to expand employment resources for Richmond residents at risk of or living in poverty. (*Action 1.4*)
- In May 2023, the City launched a new Instructor/Lifeguard Subsidy Program (ILSP) targeted to youth and adult residents (13+ years) who face financial barriers to accessing the training required to become a swim instructor or lifeguard. In the first six months, 13 Richmond residents were enrolled in the program; by the end of 2023, one participant had completed the required training and was hired by the City as an instructor/lifeguard. The ILSP continues to support enrolled individuals as they complete approximately 165 hours of training through a number of courses in lifesaving, lifeguarding, first aid and swimming

instruction. This program aims to both increase the recruitment pool for instructor/lifeguard positions in Richmond, as well as provide Richmond youth and adults with financial support to pursue a career or job that builds transferrable skills. (*Action 1.4*)

- The Richmond Youth Media Program (RYMP) is a free, referral-based program for youth to learn media literacy skills. It takes place in a supportive environment that includes drop-in times to work independently, as well as structured skill-building sessions with instructors and industry professionals. RYMP has been delivered in partnership with Vancouver Coastal Health and Richmond Addictions Services Society (RASS) for ten years. Recent highlights include:
  - In 2023, RYMP participants created a video of the City's Remembrance Day ceremony, through which they gained camera operation skills filming a large scale public event and received mentorship from a film industry professional.
  - RYMP's annual Youth Art Mart in Fall 2023 provided 40 youth artist vendors the opportunity to develop entrepreneurship experience and networking skills, and to add to their artistic portfolios.
  - As part of ongoing development of the RYMP program, New Music Jam sessions were introduced in 2023 to provide opportunities for youth to explore other creative industries. (*Action 1.4*)
- The City's Art at Work professional development series for artists provided free educational webinars and workshops targeted to self-employed artists and non-profit arts organizations. As income through artistic pursuits can be intermittent and variable, these learning opportunities provide local artists with knowledge, skills and networking opportunities to strengthen their ability to pursue a career in artistic fields.
  - In 2023, seven professional development workshops were delivered, including sessions on Tax Basics, Applying to Public Art Calls, Preparing Exhibition Proposals and Grant Writing.
  - The Richmond Art Gallery delivered eight Artist Salon sessions that promote networking among emerging and established artists to build their capacity and learn from other arts professionals, share or create work and discuss upcoming artist calls.
  - Together, through online and in-person formats, these sessions attracted 431 participants and hundreds more views on-demand via YouTube. (*Action 1.4*)
- In 2022 and 2023, RPL delivered and partnered with community organizations to host programs in Richmond libraries that support employment readiness in a welcoming and low-barrier environment, including:
  - In partnership with S.U.C.C.E.S.S., monthly resume clinics paired 57 job seekers with one-on-one assistance provided by volunteer experts to discuss strategies to tailor their resumes to industry standards.
  - In 2022 and 2023, eight lesson sets of the Computer Basics Training were offered at the Ironwood Library. The program engaged 122 participants who learned fundamental computer skills for beginners.
  - In 2023, 129 free Basic English Classes for Women were hosted, in partnership with the Richmond Women's Resource Centre (RWRC). These three-week English lesson sets assisted over 1,500 women to improve their vocabulary, English pronunciation and listening skills. (*Action 1.5*)
- In May 2023, a Planner 2 (Poverty Reduction) was hired as part of the City's commitment to reducing and preventing poverty in Richmond. Drawing on a collective impact approach, this new City position provides a subject matter resource dedicated to leading implementation of the Collaborative Action Plan and providing support to coordinate and align community efforts and resources. (*Action 1.7*)





## Strategic Direction 2: Support Residents at Risk of or Living in Poverty

Challenges faced by people living in poverty include not being able to afford basic necessities, experiencing barriers to work and difficulties accessing supportive services. These situations can compound feelings of stress and isolation when individuals do not have necessary resources or supports. The City works regularly with Richmond’s network of community organizations and senior levels of government to increase access to a wide range of programs and services.

Through implementation of Strategic Direction 2, the City aims to remove barriers and increase access to the programs and resources available to community members at risk of or living in poverty and to promote resiliency and sense of inclusion in the community.

### Achievements and Highlights

- In 2022, the City launched the Newcomers Video Series to reduce barriers to information and improve access to programs and services for newcomer residents in the community. Five short videos were created to highlight the different ways newcomers can access services in Richmond. The videos were designed to complement the City’s Newcomer’s Guide to Richmond that helps new residents learn about the city and the services available to help them settle into the community. Since 2023, the Newcomers Video Series and Newcomer’s Guide to Richmond have been available in eight different languages: English, Traditional and Simplified Chinese, Punjabi, Farsi, Arabic, Ukrainian and Korean. (*Action 2.1*)
- In 2023, the City updated its website to make it easier to access information about City amenities, programs and services through improved website navigation, adoption of the latest web accessibility standards and the addition of a translation tool. These improvements have also streamlined access to helpful resources available on the City’s website that support households at risk of or living in poverty to access community programs, services and supports. These resources include the Access Richmond Guide, No or Low Cost Community Meals and Food Programs brochure, and the Recreation Fee Subsidy Program. (*Action 2.1*)

- In 2023, a Community Needs Assessment was conducted to gain an enhanced understanding of resident perspectives on the Community Services Division’s programs, services and facilities. Over 1,500 Richmond community members contributed feedback through multilingual engagement opportunities including a telephone survey, online survey hosted on Let’s Talk Richmond and in-person focus groups. The study found that Community Services facilities, programs and services were well-used among Richmond residents. Recommended actions included conducting further engagement with residents who are not primary English or Mandarin speakers and lower income households (earning less than \$50,000 per year). These findings inform parks, recreation, cultural and library services’ planning and delivery in Richmond. (*Action 2.1*)
- Richmond Public Library (RPL) is committed to improving access to library collections and resources to customers who are in the process of finding permanent housing or have no fixed address. By the end of 2023, 205 RPL customers have benefitted from the No Fixed Address Library Card that requires no proof of identification for registration. This reduced barrier card further enhances RPL’s ‘Fine Free’ initiative to waive late fines, which was introduced in 2021. (*Action 2.1*)
- An Equity Lens Toolkit to support Community Recreation’s equity-related work was developed in 2023. The toolkit included an Equity Lens for Recreation reflective guide, resource list and an evaluation plan. These resources support staff to: reflect on their collective efforts toward creating equitable access to programs, services and spaces in City recreation facilities; identify gaps and areas requiring focus; and plan actions and initiatives to continue to drive equity, diversity and inclusion forward in their work. The toolkit was developed with \$15,000 in provincial funding, provided by the PlanH Healthy Public Policy grant, administered by BC Healthy Communities, and will be implemented in early 2024. (*Action 2.1*)
- The Recreation Fee Subsidy Program (RFSP), offered by the City and Community Associations and Societies, supports residents of all ages experiencing financial hardship to access a wide range of recreation, cultural and parks programs. In the last two RFSP program years, almost 1,000 more community members have enrolled, from 1,992 participants in 2021–2022 to 2,984 participants in 2022–2023. City staff continue to monitor and refine the program to reduce barriers to accessing the program and to meet emerging community needs. Refinements in 2022 and 2023 included providing translated program materials, outreach to community organizations and expansion of a third party referral process. (*Action 2.2*)
- Through the annual City Grant Programs, the Health, Social and Safety Grants (HSS) have provided more than \$195,000 in total funding over the past two years (2022 and 2023) to eight different organizations delivering community meal and food delivery programs in Richmond. The HSS Grants provide funding to assist capacity building of non-profit agencies and faith organizations that undertook the important work of food access. As well, through the annual Parks, Recreation and Community Events Grants, over \$78,000 in total funding was provided in 2022 and 2023 to support the work of Urban Bounty and the Sharing Farm. This funding assisted Urban Bounty to lead a number of food security initiatives and the Sharing Farm to grow local produce that was primarily donated to the Richmond Food Bank. (*Action 2.4*)
- Introduced in 2023, the Active Recreation and Sport Fund aims to increase the number of Richmond children who are physically active and participating in organized sport. The introduction of this program filled a gap in funding by supporting participants enrolled in activities or sports that are not affiliated with a provincial sport organization and not delivered directly through the City’s Community Services Division. The program is administered by Richmond Sports Council with funding from the City. (*Action 2.6*)



- In Fall 2023, a pilot program was implemented to evaluate the impact of a free, high-quality after-school program on building social connections and promoting mental wellness among school-age children. On a weekly basis, the Art Truck delivered after-school programming at Cook and McKay Elementary Schools to 60 children in Grades 4–7. Art Truck sessions featured an art lesson with a professional artist, 30 minutes of activity with a physical literacy instructor and a nutritious snack based on recipes provided by Vancouver Coastal Health. The pilot program will conclude in January 2024 and project findings will inform future plans to scale up delivery of the Art Truck to better support families that face barriers to accessing quality after-school programs. The pilot was a partnership between the City, Vancouver Coastal Health and Richmond School District (SD38) and received funding from Vancouver Coastal Health and the BC Healthy Communities PlanH Grant. (*Action 2.6*)
- Throughout 2022 and 2023, the City implemented a range of programs and services to support Richmond residents experiencing homelessness using \$3.35 million in provincial funding received through the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) Strengthening Communities’ Services Grant program, including:
  - A Drop-in Centre and Shower Program, operated in partnership with Turning Point Recovery Society at Brighthouse Pavilion, provided daily meals, access to computers and the Internet, service navigation and referral, and shower and laundry services to Richmond residents experiencing or at risk of homelessness.
  - Warming Centres, located at South Arm Outdoor Pool and Brighthouse Pavilion, provided a place for individuals experiencing homelessness to stay warm and dry on nights of extreme cold throughout the winter months. Visitors received snacks and warm beverages, and access to referrals to support services. Warming Centres were operated in partnership with Salvation Army and Turning Point Recovery Society.
  - A Clinical Support Program assisted people who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness provided access to a range of services and supports including mobility aids, foot care, dental work and other health and personal care services. Delivered by Turning Point Society and the Salvation Army, these much needed services improved the quality of life and the dignity of Richmond residents who are precariously housed or un-housed.
  - The City distributed \$39,500 in provincial funding to support emergency food programs and outreach initiatives. (*Action 2.9*)
- In 2022 and 2023, RPL offered 16 tax clinic programs in partnership with the Lord’s Harvest Fellowship. This program supported 376 people with filing their personal income tax returns with assistance from trained community volunteers. Provision of free income tax filing support for people with low incomes helps to reduce barriers for individuals to access government benefits that can supplement household finances. (*Action 2.9*)



### Strategic Direction 3: Increase Awareness and Educate

Building a community that is inclusive of all residents regardless of socioeconomic standing requires increased awareness and understanding of the needs and challenges of those at risk of or living in poverty. As well, participation of residents with lived or living experience of poverty is essential to developing initiatives that address their needs to ensure solutions are accessible and meaningful.

Through implementation of Strategic Direction 3, the City aims to develop a shared understanding of the needs of individuals and families at risk of or living in poverty and to increase opportunities for people with lived experience to contribute to the development of poverty reduction initiatives. This enables the City, community organizations, and individuals themselves to advocate more effectively for funding, policies and programs that best support Richmond community members.

#### Achievements and Highlights

- The Union of British Columbia Municipalities' (UBCM) Convention provides an opportunity for members of City Council and staff to raise awareness with Provincial Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) about social issues that affect Richmond residents. Many of the supports that assist residents at risk of or living in poverty are funded by senior levels of government. Some of the key messages delivered by the City in 2022 and 2023 reinforced that more Richmond residents relied on the food bank, the incidence of homelessness was on the rise, and there was a growing number of Richmond households on the BC Housing Registry. The City plays an important role in communicating local needs and advocating for funding and policy tools to take action. (*Action 3.1*)



- In 2022, the City received a \$50,000 grant from the Province of BC’s Poverty Reduction Planning and Action program, administered by UBCM, to develop and implement the Community Services Pop Ups (Pop Ups) in collaboration with Richmond Public Library (RPL). These free, monthly drop-in sessions at Brighthouse Library connected residents to a wide range of community-based services that support people with lower incomes. These included programs that assist with navigating health and benefit systems. The pilot was implemented from December 2022 to May 2023 and, due to ongoing need, the Pop Ups have continued as a monthly Brighthouse Library program. By December 2023, the Pop Ups supported over 1,000 Richmond community members in accessing community-based resources. Approximately 14 community organizations participated each month. (*Action 3.2*)
- In 2023, the City received another \$50,000 grant from UBCM to develop the Community Services Connectors Pilot Program (Connectors Pilot Program) in collaboration with RPL. This peer-to-peer program will train Richmond community members with experience navigating resources and benefit systems to help residents with lower incomes to find and access resources. Complementing the Pop Ups, the Connectors Pilot Program will provide additional targeted outreach to Richmond residents with lower incomes outside of the city centre on a weekly basis with one-on-one support. The program launched in early 2024. (*Action 3.2*)
- The Library Champions Project is a three-month volunteer program for newcomers that is offered bi-annually by RPL. In 2022 and 2023, 41 Champions participated in the program. In total, they delivered 150 group presentations to community agencies and connected with 710 newcomers. Library Champions receive training that builds their communication, presentation and outreach skills, and increases their awareness of programs, services and resources available in Richmond. Since the program began 10 years ago, RPL has trained 23 cohorts of Library Champions. (*Action 3.2*)
- In 2022 and 2023, RPL staff conducted targeted outreach through 13 onsite visits at the Richmond Food Bank where they connected with 303 residents who were experiencing food insecurity. Engagement included promotion of library resources, collections and programs, and resulted in 43 library card registrations. (*Action 3.2*)
- In 2023, RPL’s Community Table program, located at Brighthouse and Ironwood Libraries, helped over 550 customers receive information on a wide variety of free local services and resources, including addiction recovery, housing, mental health and newcomer supports. The Community Table program provides a free space for non-profit community partners to connect with library customers and inform them about Richmond-based resources and services. (*Action 3.2*)
- In February 2023, the City hosted a two part community conversation to raise awareness and build understanding about the circumstance of homelessness in Richmond. HOME: A Community Conversation on Homelessness provided an opportunity for participants to discuss what contributes to homelessness, share their hopes for the future, and generate ideas for how Richmond can be a more connected, inclusive community. In the first part, Richmond residents considered the meaning of homelessness through shared experiences, stories and discussion. The second part built upon previous discussions and explored ideas to create a sense of belonging for everyone in the community. Resources developed from this project will be available in 2024 to support the wider community to reflect on homelessness in Richmond. (*Action 3.4*)
- In June 2022, the Working with People Experiencing Homelessness training was introduced to equip City staff with knowledge, skills and resources when providing customer service to unhoused community members. Level 1 training launched in Fall 2022 and has been completed by 246 employees. Level 2 training, which builds on the information and concepts from Level 1, was launched in early 2023 and has been completed by 155 staff. These training resources were designed to help staff in City facilities respond with empathy and decrease stigma when interacting with community members experiencing homelessness. The training provided communication strategies for day-to-day interactions and increased staff awareness

about services available for unhoused community members. The training modules were developed in collaboration with the Homelessness Services Association of BC, and funded by the UBCM Strengthening Communities’ Services Grant. (*Action 3.4*)

- In 2023, Richmond Public Library staff received training through Homelesslibrary.com, which provided all staff with 3.5 hours of core training and ongoing access to monthly webinars on various aspects of de-escalation and empathy-driven approaches to solving problems and preventing conflict. These critical skills and knowledge better equip library staff to support Richmond’s diverse community with confidence, empathy and a high level of customer engagement. (*Action 3.4*)
- From May through June 2022, the Wayfinding Studio project paired Richmond-based artist Mickey L.D. Morgan with clients of the Richmond Emergency Response Centre (ERC) operated by Turning Point Recovery Society. ERC residents produced artwork through a variety of workshops, including drawing, painting, craft making and storytelling activities. Their collection of works spoke to themes of place, displacement, community, home and other issues important to the artists. The resulting exhibition at Brighthouse Library raised awareness about issues surrounding homelessness. This project was part of the City’s Engaging Artists in the Community Program. (*Action 3.5*)
- From May to July 2023, the City engaged a team of community members to conduct peer-led public consultation activities to gather feedback to inform development of the City’s updated Social Development Strategy. In addition to an online survey hosted on Let’s Talk Richmond and pop-up engagements held in City parks, targeted outreach events were held at the Brighthouse Drop-In and Shower Program and Richmond Presbyterian Church Meal Program to explore what a more inclusive and thriving Richmond could look like. The engagement process also involved discussions with youth, seniors, newcomers and refugees, people with disabilities and people experiencing mental health and substance use concerns, as well as organizations that serve these populations. (*Action 3.5*)
- In Fall 2023, the City launched the Energize Richmond program that trained a total of 30 Community Leaders in Richmond to host climate conversations with peers. The recruitment process included targeted engagement in December 2023 to recruit six Community Leaders who aimed to include equity considerations in their climate conversations to be held in 2024. These individuals are planning a variety of activities such as a cycling tour, conversations in their places of work and worship, and hosting cooling stations. (*Action 3.5*)



## Strategic Direction 4: Research, Monitor and Evaluate

Developing an understanding of the evolving context and local trends related to poverty in Richmond is essential to determining effective and appropriate responses. Beyond poverty line thresholds that are based on income measures, tracking community usage of supportive programs and services, as well as research on community vulnerability provides a snapshot of local need.

Through implementation of Strategic Direction 4, the City's aims to monitor Richmond-specific information and stay abreast of emerging best practices in poverty reduction and prevention. This contributes to the community's collective efforts to support its most vulnerable residents.

### Achievements and Highlights

- To better understand evolving community needs, the City has compiled research on the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic related to poverty reduction (**Action 4.2**) and developed a community data tracker to better understand trends in use of community-based services and supports (**Action 4.1**). Use of this information will inform the development of future collaborative poverty reduction initiatives.
- Hosted by Richmond Public Library (RPL), NewToBC delivered a presentation on the 2023 Immigration Demographics profiles for Richmond to RPL and City staff, community organizations and newcomers. This in-depth profile of immigrant settlement facts included analysis related to countries of origin, education levels, employment and income. Participants also heard first-hand settlement experiences from newcomers and engaged in discussion related to immigrant settlement in Richmond. This interactive session prompted staff and service providers to reflect on how the data and first-hand experiences inform program and service delivery to Richmond's newest residents. NewToBC is a program of Public Library Interlink, a federation of public library systems in BC. (**Action 4.3**)
- To share local promising practices, in 2022, the City presented at the annual Tamarack Conference to highlight the 2021–2031 Collaborative Action Plan to Reduce and Prevent Poverty in Richmond. In 2023, the City and RPL presented on a province-wide webinar panel during a monthly BC Communities of Practice virtual meeting to highlight the success of the Community Services Pop Ups. The City is an active member of Tamarack Institute's Communities Ending Poverty network, enabling staff to stay abreast of best practices and emerging trends, and strengthen provincial networks. (**Action 4.4**)





## Next Steps and Conclusion

Since the Collaborative Action Plan was first adopted in 2021, community data shows that Richmond residents have increasingly been accessing supportive services. In the current economic climate, even households that do not fall below the poverty line are experiencing financial pressures due to inflation and cost of living increases. It will take collaborative efforts from all community sectors to reduce the impacts of poverty and prevent more individuals and families from feeling its effects.

The City and its many community partners have made noteworthy progress on the implementation of strategic actions in the first two years of implementation of the 2021–2031 Collaborative Action Plan to Prevent and Reduce Poverty in Richmond. Collaboration is essential in developing whole community solutions that improve access to a range of supportive resources, services and programs. These include employment services, affordable housing navigation, transportation options, navigating health and benefit systems, and supports to promote mental health and wellness. Of the plan's 26 strategic actions, three of the six short-term actions have been completed, and a significant number of the remaining actions are in progress.

The City will continue to work together with community organizations and across sectors to reduce and prevent poverty in Richmond. Over the next two years, priority efforts will focus on: reducing food insecurity; strengthening employment resources; continuing to improve access to community resources and City services; and fostering dialogue with people with lived experience of poverty.

Reducing and preventing poverty improves a community's economy, social connectedness and overall resiliency and well-being. For Richmond residents at risk of or living in poverty, it is intended that collaborative efforts will ultimately promote a greater sense of choice, agency, belonging and inclusion in the community.







# Appendix: Summary of Collaborative Action Plan Strategic Actions and Status

The tables below outline the strategic actions in the 2021–2031 Collaborative Action Plan to Prevent and Reduce Poverty in Richmond and their status at the end of 2023.

## Strategic Direction 1: Reduce and Prevent Poverty

No.	Action	Time Frame	Status
1.1	Create a Community Poverty Reduction and Prevention Table to support implementation of the Collaborative Action Plan.	Short-term	Completed, converted to Ongoing
1.2	Pursue funding opportunities to advance poverty reduction and prevention initiatives.	Ongoing	Ongoing
1.3	Develop and implement a poverty lens criteria to support future City social planning processes (e.g. strategy and policy development, community needs assessments).	Medium-term	Initiated
1.4	Expand work experience, mentorship, and upskilling opportunities for residents at risk of or living in poverty.	Long-term	In progress
1.5	Increase educational opportunities to support employment readiness and digital literacy programs for residents at risk of or living in poverty.	Medium-term	Not yet initiated
1.6	Develop social enterprise opportunities in the community to stimulate job creation for populations at risk of or living in poverty.	Long-term	Not yet initiated
1.7	Provide additional staff resources to support the implementation of the Collaborative Action Plan and prevent and reduce poverty in the community.	Short-term	Completed, converted to Ongoing



## Strategic Direction 2: Support Residents at Risk of or Living in Poverty

No.	Action	Time Frame	Status
2.1	Reduce barriers, address gaps and streamline access to City programs and services for residents at risk of or living in poverty.	Ongoing	Initiated
2.2	Continue to monitor and refine the Recreation Fee Subsidy Program to ensure it responds to changing community needs.	Ongoing	Ongoing
2.3	Explore the development of a city-wide community food hub to expand access to healthy food and food skills programs for residents at risk of or living in poverty.	Medium-term	Initiated
2.4	Implement initiatives to increase food security in the community for residents at risk of or living in poverty.	Ongoing	Initiated
2.5	Explore the development of a community resource centre for residents at risk of or living in poverty.	Short-term	Initiated
2.6	Provide accessible community wellness opportunities for residents at risk of or living in poverty (e.g. dental clinics, mental wellness-based programming).	Ongoing	Initiated
2.7	Explore ways to improve community connections and health impacts for residents at risk of or living in poverty.	Medium-term	Not yet initiated
2.8	Reduce transportation-related barriers in the community for residents at risk of or living in poverty.	Medium-term	Initiated
2.9	Develop programs and services that respond to the specific needs of demographics at risk of or living in poverty (e.g. energy poverty reduction programs, financial literacy training for young adults, family-based outreach programming).	Ongoing	Initiated

### Strategic Direction 3: Increase Awareness and Educate

No.	Action	Time Frame	Status
3.1	Advocate to senior levels of government regarding the needs of residents at risk of or living in poverty in Richmond (e.g. health care, transportation).	Ongoing	Ongoing
3.2	Implement targeted outreach that facilitates connections to community programs and services for residents at risk of or living in poverty (e.g. community navigator programs).	Short-term	In progress
3.3	Identify new opportunities to share poverty-related information and best practices among the City, community service organizations and key stakeholders.	Medium-term	Not initiated yet
3.4	Raise awareness and increase understanding of the challenges faced by residents at risk of or living in poverty in the community to support increased inclusion.	Medium-term	Initiated
3.5	Foster dialogue with residents at risk of or living in poverty to ensure they are active participants in the development of initiatives related to reducing and preventing poverty.	Ongoing	Initiated

## Strategic Direction 4: Research, Monitor and Evaluate

No.	Action	Time Frame	Status
4.1	Develop a consistent set of community-based measures to track trends and changing needs of residents at risk of or living in poverty.	Short-term	Completed, converted to Ongoing
4.2	Research and monitor the impacts of COVID-19 on populations at risk of or living in poverty in Richmond.	Short-term	In progress
4.3	Monitor and analyze trends in poverty-related data to understand and respond to emerging and changing community needs.	Ongoing	Ongoing
4.4	Research and evaluate best practices related to poverty reduction and prevention and continue to identify opportunities for Richmond.	Ongoing	Ongoing
4.5	Report out every two years on the progress of the Collaborative Action Plan.	Ongoing	Ongoing







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