

**TO:** MAYOR & COUNCIL  
**FROM:** GENERAL MANAGER PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT  
GENERAL MANAGER COMMUNITY SAFETY  
**SUBJECT:** **HOMELESS RESPONSE: WINTER 2023-2024**  
**PURPOSE:** To provide information on homelessness services for the 2023-2024 winter season including the addition of a winter shelter service.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**THAT** staff be directed to establish a license agreement with BC Housing for the operation of a winter shelter at 7320 Buller Avenue from December 1, 2023 to April 30, 2024;

**THAT** the use of the Operating Housing Reserve in the amount of \$140,500 be authorized to provide a grant to Progressive Housing Society to support the winter shelter's on-site staffing requirements; and

**THAT** BC Housing, Fraser Health Authority, Progressive Housing Society, the Society to End Homelessness in Burnaby and the Mayor's Task Force on Unsheltered Community Members be advised of the City's approach to homelessness services for the 2023-2024 winter season, as outlined in this report.

## CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER'S COMMENTS

I concur with the recommendations of the General Manager Planning and Development and the General Manager Community Safety.

### 1.0 POLICY SECTION

This report aligns with the following Council-adopted policies, plans, and strategies:

- *Housing and Homelessness Strategy* (2021);
- *Community Safety Plan* (2020);
- *City's Equity Policy* (2020);
- *Mayor's Task Force on Community Housing* (2019);
- *Corporate Strategic Plan* (2022); and
- *Social Sustainability Strategy* (2011).

**2.0 BACKGROUND**

The City has expanded its involvement in homelessness issues in Burnaby since 2018. The City has worked with BC Housing to open a temporary shelter (2294 Douglas Road, opened August 2019) two supportive housing developments (3986 Norland Avenue, opened October 2019 and 4100 Ledger Avenue, opened October 2023) and the now closed Emergency Response Centre (3860 Sperling Avenue, opened January 2021).

The City was also successful in applying for and receiving a grant of \$1,223,375 in 2021 and \$873,464 in 2022 from the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) Strengthening Communities' Services Program to work with community partners to create additional support services (extreme heat cooling stations, a mobile shower program, expanded outreach services, and a now closed homeless hub daytime drop-in centre).

In response to cold winter months, the City also opened its own warming centres in the winters of 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 which operated nightly from December to the end of March. In 2021-2022, the City activated an extreme weather warming centre at Bonsor Recreation complex, as triggered by extreme weather conditions at the end of December/early January.

In 2022-2023, the City activated an extreme weather warming centre at 7320 Buller Avenue on three occasions for a total of 13 nights, as triggered by extreme weather conditions.

This report provides an update on available homelessness services in the community for the 2023-2024 winter season and proposes that the City support an additional service of a winter shelter to operated in partnership with BC Housing and Progressive Housing Society.

**3.0 EXISTING HOMELESS SERVICES – TEMPORARY SHELTERS CENTRES**

The following existing services will be available this winter:

**3.1 Douglas Year-round Shelter, 2294 Douglas Road**

*Capacity: 40 beds*  
*Status: Full with 5 to 7 people turned away per night*

The Douglas Shelter was opened in 2019 August. The shelter operates in partnership with BC Housing and Progressive Housing Society. The City is responsible for lease costs of this privately owned site and building, BC Housing funds the operation of the shelter, and Progressive Housing operates the centre. The Douglas Shelter is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

At the time of this report, the operator reports that the shelter operates at full capacity and turns away, on average, five to seven people per night. For extreme weather circumstances, there is a potential to increase to 43 beds to accommodate very frail or elderly visitors who may arrive at the shelter.

### **3.2 Community-operated Extreme Weather Response (EWR)**

- 20 beds (Neighbourhood Church, 7135 Walker Avenue) from the 1<sup>st</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> of the month
- 27 beds (Westminster Bible Chapel-7540 6<sup>th</sup> Street) from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the end of the month

The Task Force to End Homelessness in Burnaby coordinates the activation, notification, and operation of Burnaby's extreme weather response (EWR). BC Housing funds the extreme weather response program (through the Homelessness Services Association of BC) and Lookout Housing and Health Society operates the response with other community organizations and volunteers. The extreme weather response alternates between two locations: for the first 15 days of the month, the response is located at the Neighbourhood Church (formerly the Southside Community Church) at 7135 Walker Avenue and from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the end of the month, it is located at Westminster Bible Chapel at 7540 6<sup>th</sup> Street.

The EWR is activated when conditions are deemed severe enough to present substantial threat to the life and/or health of homeless persons. For the community-operated response, extreme weather is defined as: any or a combination of the following weather patterns (but not limited to):

- temperatures at or below zero degrees Celsius, where temperatures are not absolute and are flexible to other weather conditions;
- wind chill that reduces the temperature to feel like 0° Celsius;
- snow accumulation;
- three or more days of rainfall that make it difficult or impossible for individuals to remain dry;
- freezing rain and/or sleet; and
- severe wind warning.

When activated, the shelter operates from 7:00pm to 9:00am. The EWR programs runs from November 1, 2023 to April 15, 2024.

Lookout Society has advised staff that they will try to accommodate a few more people at either site if needed to avoid turning people away.

### **3.3 City-operated Extreme Weather Warming Centre**

Emergency Management BC (EMBC) provides guidelines for when local governments can open an extreme weather warming centre(s) for which a task number can be assigned and cost recovery may be possible. For the Fraser Region, the Vancouver Coastal Region and the Vancouver Island Region, the activation triggers for an extreme weather warming centre can include the following conditions:

- Environment Canada is forecasting, for the next 24-hour period, a temperature of -4° Celsius or lower as the lowest temperature for that period;

- According to Environment Canada, the temperature currently is -4° Celsius or lower;
- Environment Canada, for the next 24-hour period, is forecasting a temperature of 0° Celsius or lower as the lowest temperature for that period and has issued a weather warning; or
- According to Environment Canada the temperature currently is 0° Celsius or lower and Environment Canada has issued a weather warning.

Taking the above activation triggers in consideration, should extreme weather conditions occur this winter, the City will activate its own warming centre on a nightly basis for the duration of an extreme weather event. The front office portion on the west side of the City-owned warehouse at 7320 Buller Avenue is available for this purpose. Staff are retained on a call-out basis and available to resource the City warming centre as required.

**4.0 ADDITIONAL RESPONSE**

At its meeting on June 9, 2023, the Mayor’s Task Force on Unsheltered Community Members received correspondence from the Society to End Homelessness in Burnaby requesting that the City take action to provide additional winter shelter services in Burnaby.

Since then, the City has learned that BC Housing has funding available to support an overnight winter shelter service in Burnaby. With this information, staff have explored options based on a model where BC Housing provides operating funding, the City provides a suitable venue at a nominal rate, and a non-profit operator provides the service.

Based on the above, staff have determined that the front portion of the east side of the Buller warehouse at 7320 Buller Avenue could serve this purpose (see Attachment 1). The subject site is located on the southeast corner of Buller Avenue and Beresford Street and is zoned M2 General Industrial District. Temporary shelters are a permitted use in this district (the City’s existing extreme weather warming centre is located in the west, front portion of the warehouse). The property is designated for future park and mixed-use development in the Royal Oak Plan (currently under review). It is bordered by industrial properties to the north, east and west and multi-unit residential dwellings at the southern side of the site. It is within 500 metres of the Royal Oak SkyTrain station.

In investigating the space for an overnight shelter, the operator and City staff noted that monitoring all areas of the space (e.g., the existing washrooms), would be challenging given its current configuration. To address this, staff would propose that additional staffing be provided on site versus undertaking costly renovations to improve sightlines. However, since BC Housing’s funding covers the cost of two staff per shift, this additional staffing cost would need to be covered by the City. For the five-month period between December 1, 2023 to April 30, 2024, this would amount to \$140,500.

It is also noted that Council requested staff to explore the option of providing a 24-hour service versus on overnight service (8pm to 8am). It was subsequently determined that to provide this level of service, additional extensive renovations (e.g. installation of

showers) would be required that would delay the opening of the shelter. Instead, it is proposed that the shelter open for longer hours each day, specifically from 4 pm to 8 am, seven days a week. These longer hours of operations would allow the operator to provide dinner and greater access for clinical outreach teams to visit the site.

Based on the above, it is proposed that the City establish a license agreement with BC Housing at a nominal rate to provide a winter shelter service for 40 people, 16-hours a day, seven days a week from December 1, 2023 to April 30, 2024. BC Housing would be responsible for contracting with the operator, Progressive Housing Society, for the operation of the winter shelter. Further, for the reasons noted above, it is proposed that the City provide a housing operating grant of \$140,500 to Progressive Housing Society to allow for additional staffing to be provided on site.

**5.0 COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

If the proposed winter shelter service is approved by Council, BC Housing would provide a notification letter to properties in the immediate vicinity of the site. The letter would provide contact information where further information could be obtained about the shelter use.

Further, should the winter shelter service be approved, it is recommended that the City's homeless response for the winter of 2023-2024 be communicated to BC Housing, Fraser Health Authority, Progressive Housing Society, the Society to End Homelessness in Burnaby and the Mayor's Task Force on Unsheltered Community Members.

**6.0 FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

If approved, the east front portion of 7320 Buller Avenue would be licensed to BC Housing at a nominal rate.

Furthermore, a grant of \$140,500 is requested to be provided to Progressive Housing Society, which will be funded from the Operating Housing Reserve. This was not included in the 2023 – 2027 Financial Plan, however, a sufficient reserve balance is available to accommodate this grant.

Respectfully submitted,

E.W. Kozak, General Manager Planning and Development and

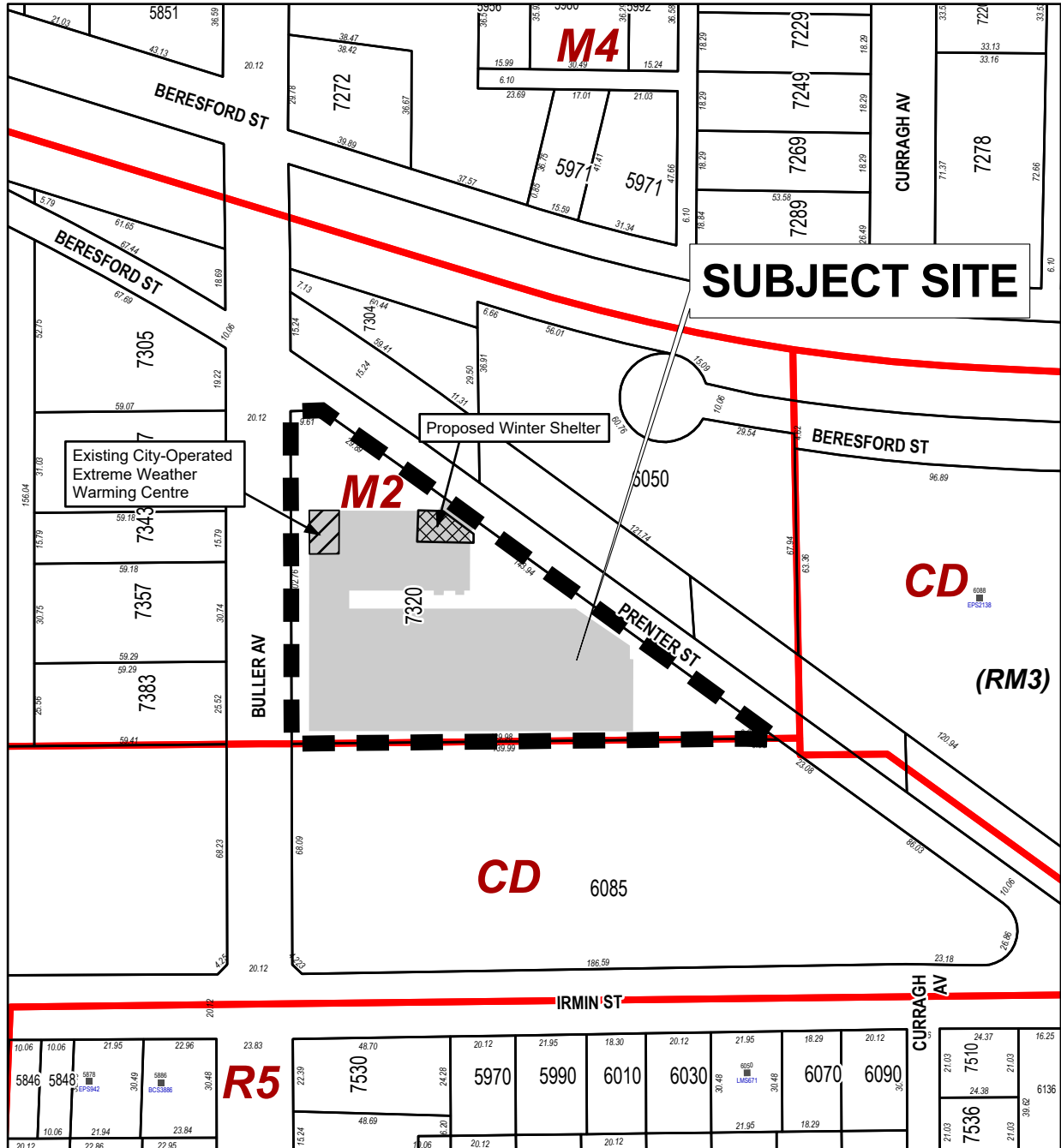
Dave Critchley, General Manager Community Safety





**ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment 1 – Sketch 1 – Map of 7320 Buller Avenue

**REPORT CONTRIBUTORS**

This report was prepared by Margaret Manifold, Planner 3, and reviewed by Lee-Ann Garnett, Deputy General Manager, Planning and Development.



	<p>PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT</p>
<p>Date: OCT 12 2023</p>	<h2>7320 BULLER AVENUE</h2>
<p>Scale: 1:2,000</p>	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  Subject Site         </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  Proposed Winter Shelter         </div> </div>
<p>Drawn By: RW</p>	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  Existing City-Operated Extreme Weather Warming Centre         </div> </div>

Sketch 1