greater victoria coalition to end homelessness

hope has found a home

Housing Project Support & Coalition Expansion

An Outreach & Engagement Strategy

Approved
August 9, 2017

The solutions to homelessness are as diverse as the people who experience it, and we all have a role to play in ending it. The Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness Society (the Coalition) was formed in 2008 with a mission to end homelessness in the capital region. The Coalition consists of service providers, non-profit organizations, all levels of government, businesses, post-secondary institutions, the faith community, people with a lived experience of homelessness, and members of the general community. This diverse membership is referred to as Coalition Stakeholders

Our Vision:

A Region Without Homelessness

Our Mission:

1. To ensure appropriate solutions are in place to serve those individuals experiencing chronic homelessness in the capital region.

2. To ensure all people facing homelessness in the capital region have access to safe, affordable, appropriate, long-term housing.

Purpose

The purpose of this strategy is twofold:

1. to enable the Coalition to expand the number of engaged member stakeholder organizations, and

2. to assist Coalition members in more effectively engaging neighbourhoods and communities to support affordable and supportive/supported housing, resulting in more shovel-ready projects approved in a timely fashion.

This strategy does not speak to engaging the general public, people with lived experience (PWLE), or communication between coalition stakeholders. Engaging these audiences has been addressed separately with the Messaging Toolkit, Engagement Toolkit for PWLE, and the Internal Communication Plan respectively.[1]

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1. Each of these documents is available on the Coalition's website victoriahomelessness.ca

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PRIMARY AUDIENCES

Land Use Community

The community audience includes all local government elected officials within the Capital Regional District, local government staff of all 13 member municipalities and the Capital Regional District who are engaged in land use and social planning, and neighbourhood associations, both formally registered and informal groups.

Future Coalition Stakeholder Members

Prospective members include organizations that provide housing and support services for people experiencing homelessness and PWLE. Qualified organizations should have a commitment to serving PWLE stated in their mission and practiced in their operations.

SECONDARY AUDIENCES

We recognize that other community stakeholders may be engaged by virtue of their participation in providing affordable and supportive housing. These include the Provincial Government, Federal Government, philanthropists, and the housing development industry.

OUTCOMES

Future Coalition Stakeholder Members

1. Full membership enrollment of the estimated 200 or more housing and service providers serving the needs of those experiencing homelessness and PWLE.

2. Public support by the majority of stakeholder member organizations for individual member projects that require municipal approval.

Land Use Community

1. A lens shift'from viewing people who are experiencing homeless and PWLE with a stigma to a perspective that embraces everyone as a valued neighbour.

2. A full complement of affordable and supportive/supported housing plans at the regional, local and neighbourhood level.

3. Timely rezoning and development permit approval periods of no longer than six months for affordable and supportive housing projects.

4. Communities trust the Coalition's mission and messages.

> An example of an 'affordable and supportive' housing plan is the City of Vancouver's Supportive Housing Strategy approved in 2007. A citizen commented at a public meeting,
>
> 'Great plan, we really need more housing...I'm giving you support for providing supportive housing in my neighbourhood.'
>
> (Housing in My Backyard: A Municipal Guide for Responding to NIMBY, Canadian Federation of Municipalities, 2009.)

LINKING COMMUNITY OUTCOMES TO THE DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

An inclusive community with a diversity of income, social status, age, and abilities is recognized by land use professionals, social planners and public health practitioners as a contribution to positive public health outcomes. The Social Determinants of Health[2] as described by the Public Health Agency of Canada represent an evidence-based approach for actions that contribute to the creation of inclusive communities.

The community outcomes related to an inclusive lens shift (outcome 3) and affordable and supportive housing plans (outcome 4) are linked to social determinants of health.

Relevant determinants, described more fully below, include well-being and social environments, physical environments, social support networks, and personal health practices and coping skills. People who have previously experienced homelessness and those who require support services can benefit from rich social environments, clean and well designed physical environments, social support networks, and good personal health practices and coping skills influenced from a positive socio-economic environment. All citizens can benefit from living in a neighbourhood that includes people who need affordable and supportive/supported housing.

DESCRIPTIONS OF THE RELEVANT SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

Well-Being and Social Environments
The importance of social support extends to the broader community of civic vitality and strength of social networks within a community, region, province or country. It is reflected in the institutions, organizations and informal sharing practices that people and organizations are co-creating where they share resources, work collaboratively, and build relationships.

Physical Environments
The physical environment is an important determinant of health given that levels of exposure to contaminants in our air, water, food and soil can cause a variety of adverse health effects, including cancer, birth defects, respiratory illness and gastrointestinal ailments. Also, in our local built environment factors related to housing, indoor air quality, and the design of communities and transportation systems significantly influence our physical and psychological well-being.

Social Support Networks
Social support networks are very important in helping people solve problems and deal with adversity, as well as in maintaining a sense of mastery and control over life circumstances. According to the Public Health Agency of Canada, the caring and respect that occurs in social relationships, and the resulting sense of satisfaction and well-being, seem to act as a buffer against health problems.

Personal Health Practices and Coping Skills
Personal Health Practices and Coping Skills include individual actions that prevent diseases and promote self-care, coping with challenges, developing self-reliance, solving problems and making choices that enhance health. Lifestyle choices include individual choices, but also the influence of social, economic, and environmental factors on the decisions people make about their health. Research points to the growing recognition that personal life "choices" are greatly influenced by the socioeconomic environments in which people live, learn, work and play.

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2. The Public Health Agency of Canada identifies 12 key social determinants of health. See http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ph-sp/ determinants/index-eng.php#determinants for full descriptions.
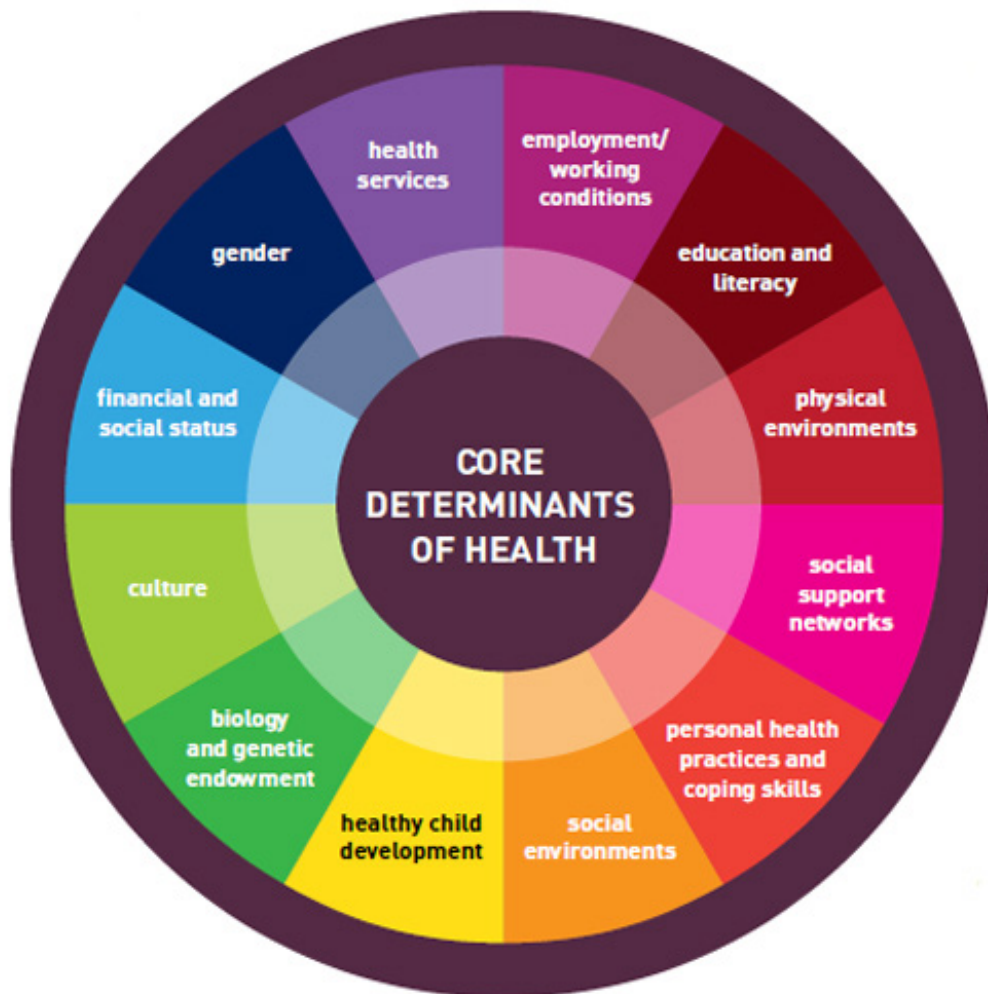
The BC Provincial Health Services Authority has identified specific evidence-based actions for housing that contribute to community health.[3] These are described as follows:

Evidence Based Actions for Healthy Housing

1. Increase access to affordable housing through provision of diverse housing forms and tenure types.
2. Ensure adequate housing quality for all segments of society.
3. Prioritize housing for the homeless, elderly, low income groups, and people with disabilities.
4. Site and zone housing developments to minimize exposure to environmental hazards.

Health outcomes for increased access to affordable housing programs and mixed income housing developments include reduced psychiatric distress, conflict and depression, and an increase in general health, mental health, and quality of life.

3. Healthy Built Environment Linkages: A toolkit for design, planning, health, BC Provincial Health Services Authority, March 2014.

TACTICS

Future Coalition Stakeholder Members

Outcome #1

Tactic	Who	When	Measure
Invite organization membership and participation through formal 'face to face' meetings hosted by a Coalition stakeholder member	Coalition staff creates a 'match up' schedule for meetings of current and prospective members follow up on their prospects	Begin within the next 3 months	20% increase in membership per year until a majority of prospective organizations are members
Invite all potential members to a recognition event of coalition success and ongoing challenges (Note: this is also recommended as annual event in draft Internal Communication Plan)	Coalition staff plans and organize the event and a large stakeholder(s) sponsors the venue and refreshments	Within the next year	20% increase in membership per year until a majority of prospective organizations are members
Undertake an ongoing process of stakeholder mapping to strategically support identifying future members; provide an updated version to the Community Engagement and Communication Working Group	Coalition staff	Ongoing; on a quarterly basis	50% of members are engaged at the collaborative level or above on a quarterly basis (currently this is just under 50%)
Create a website resource listing all housing and support service providers, their capacity, any existing openings and how to access services. Also include new projects in development	Coalition staff & contractors	Begin work within 3 months	Fully functioning within the 2017/18 fiscal year

Land Use Community

Short term actions for specific housing projects: Outcomes #2 & #5

The majority of action items in the following list are recommended as responsibilities of individual member stakeholders.

Tactic	Who	When	Measure
Coalition notified of upcoming project proposals that require local government approval	Member stakeholders	As need arises	All members notify the coalition about their projects
Identify champions six months, when possible, in advance of a land use decision for affordable and supportive housing projects	Individual members and Coalition staff	As need arises	All members participate as need arises
Host respectful and factual dialogue in communities through workshops hosted as part of a development approval process	Member proponent with assistance from Coalition staff	As need arises	All members participate when appropriate and as need arises
Promote via email and social media the use of the Coalition's Speaker's Bureau among Coalition members seeking project approval by local governments	Coalition staff	Quarterly reminders and updates	All members avail of the Speaker's Bureau as need arises
Establish a fund to support community engagement for affordable and supportive housing approvals	CRD and local governments	Begin dialogue in three months	Fund is established within the next two years

Long Term Actions to Support Lens Shift—Outcomes #3, #4, #5 & #6

Tactic	Who	When	Measure
Learn what municipal councils and neighbourhood associations know and are doing about affordable and supportive housing through their Official Community Plan policies, Community Strategic Plan, Supportive & Affordable Housing Plans, and programs	Coalition staff	Within next three months	Complete status report
Host a forum or workshop with all local government elected officials, chief administrative officers, social planners, and land use planners on the value of Community-wide Affordable & Supportive Housing Plans (reference the City of Vancouver experience)	Capital Regional District and Coalition staff	Hold event within six months	Majority of local governments support development of Affordable & Supportive Housing Plans
Train Speaker's Bureau members in effective speaking and dialogue with citizens	Social Inclusion Advisory Committee (SIAC)	First within three months	Annual training offered
Publish messages of Coalition successes via social media platforms and traditional media	Coalition staff	Monthly or as successes occur	All members share project success with coalition
Coalition offers workshops to its member stakeholders on effective community engagement and communication strategies to use to engage local communities	Coalition staff	Within next six months and annually	75% of members participate within the first year

5. The United Nations clarifies that the right to adequate housing does not require the State to build housing for everyone, but that the right covers measures that are needed to prevent homelessness, prohibit forced evictions, address discrimination, focus on the most vulnerable and marginalized groups, ensure security of tenure to all, and guarantee that everyone's housing is adequate. See 'The Right to Adequate Housing, Fact Sheet No. 21,' Office of the United Nations High Commissioners for Human Rights, p. 6; available at www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/FS21_rev_1_Housing_en.pdf

Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness

MESSAGING

We will create or find published information on the topics listed below. Information will be used in social media, the Coalition website, press releases, and engaging communities for the short (project specific) and long term (lens shift change):

- Provide links to personal stories and videos of individual and families dealing with mental health challenges and substance use. For example, Cool Aid produces a video story twice monthly. These could be used to engage communities in general information or for project-specific workshops.

- Case study examples of existing local supportive housing and support services how they successfully integrate into neighbourhoods and make them safer.

- Affordable housing can improve neighbourhood, particularly when it is staff supported.

- Cost offset savings to the public health and service system by providing housing and support services

- Statistics of evidence of no crime increase or actual crime decreases in neighbourhoods with affordable and supportive housing due to the stability, structure and services available to the residents.

- Adequate housing is a human right.[5]

We will avoid use the following terms in our discussions amongst ourselves and our neighbours:

- NIMBY –Not in My Backyard

- BANANA –Build Absolutely Nothing Anywhere Near Anything

- Opposition

We will be respectful, listen, and recognize the legitimacy of concerns raised.

We will engage neighbours by responding to their concerns with facts and, if feasible, building and site design changes.

We will seek to move neighbourhood and elected official concern to support.

APPENDIX 1: SAMPLE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM

This sample program is the responsibility of a coalition member proponent. The coalition may offer assistance as needed.

The recommended steps in this program may be part of the rezoning and development process required by municipalities and different timelines and activities may apply.

Nine months to a year prior to project approval:

- Make sure proponent's house is in order with respect to operations and neighbourhood relations

- Understand the local Official Community Plan and Zoning Bylaw to learn if a project is suitable in terms of location and scale

- Build a network of community supporters. These may include the following people and organizations:

- Elected officials (Municipal, and in some cases Provincial and Federal politicians)

- Municipal staff

- Community association members

- Local advocacy groups

- Social service agencies

- Residents who support your mission and project

- And representatives from local churches, schools, police, business community, etc.

Six months prior to project approval:

- Proponent submits Zoning Amendment application and/or Development Permit housing proposal to local government and seeks assistance in engaging the neighbourhood citizens

- GVCEH Secretariat notified and a call for support is sent out to Coalition stakeholder members

- Proponent identifies a community champion within the local jurisdiction

Five months prior to project approval:

- Neighbours and supporters invited to an open house to view concept building and site plans. Opportunity is given for neighbours to express any concerns and for informal dialogue between neighbours and the proponent. Present are supporters, a community champion, and a PWLE to interact with neighbours.

Three to four months prior to project approval:

- Building and site plans modified as required in response to community input

- One to two months prior

- Neighbours and supporters invited to a second open house to review revised plans and raise any remaining concerns

- Supporters and Coalition member stakeholders write letters of support to the local government

- Supporters and Coalition member stakeholders speak at all municipally-sanctioned public meetings in favour of the proposal

Approval date:

- Public hearing or meeting for approval

Note: This is a generalized approach. Specific types of application, Development Permits or Rezoning, differ in terms of the decision-making process, and further, local governments handle processing differently, and may or may not permit concurrent processing of Development Permits and rezoning applications.

APPENDIX 2: SAMPLE NEIGHBOURHOOD ENGAGEMENT SESSION

Venue:

- Local community room, hall or coffee shop

- The setting should be comfortable and inviting and a familiar place to most people

Supplies:

- Refreshments provided

- Drawings of proposal set up on foam core boards and easels

- Proponents program information in the form of brochures and possibly a banner or easel as appropriate

- Sign in for those who wish to be informed of proposal updates and future meetings.

- Name tags for everyone playing a role in facilitating the open house, including local government representatives and community leaders

- A few easels with blank paper for community members to write their short thoughts

Services:

- Free child care
- Bus tickets

People:

- Facilitator
- Local government staff person

- Proponent
- Local champion

- GVCEH Executive Director
- PWLE

Flow of events:

6:00   doors open

7:00 Facilitator opens the session; the proponent then provides a brief presentation about the proposal. If available and appropriate, a community champion and/or the Coalition Executive Director and/or a PWLE make a few comments. Acknowledge any neighbourhood association leaders.

7:15 A question and answer period is provided. Active listening is employed; notes are taken, factual responses are provided. For controversial projects, it may be advisable to have experts circulate among attendees for one on one conversation opportunity.

7:30 Opportunity is provided for further informal dialogue and milling about to view drawings plans, and program information.

8:00 Close open house

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

"Housing in My Backyard: A Municipal Guide for Responding to NIMBY," Canadian Federation of Municipalities, 2009.

"NIMBY: When Affordable Housing Development Meets Community Opposition," Matthew MacNeil, Housing Strategies, Inc. 2004.

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