



REQUEST FOR DECISION

MEETING DATE: August 21, 2023

TITLE: Unsheltered Recommendations Update - August 2023

DIVISION: Community & Protective Services

SUMMARY:

To provide an update to Council regarding the Community Outreach initiative and the development of Permanent Supportive Housing.

PROPOSED MOTION:

A motion is not required.

BACKGROUND / ANALYSIS:

Administration has presented and provided updates to Council several times on the matter of the unsheltered; likewise, Council has provided direction through a variety of motions dating back to August of 2022.

Initially, Council approved the opening of a Community Hub to allow for the collection of real time data to help identify the needs of the unsheltered. A motion in May of 2023 supported closing the temporary Community Hub at the end of June to allow for the transition to a Community Outreach model. The Community Outreach will be funded in part by the Building Safer Communities Grant; the City of Spruce Grove has been approved for \$767,093 over the term of the contract. In addition, funding previously directed at supporting the Community Hub will be redirected to support the transition to the Outreach Model and cover those positions not funded through the Building Safer Communities grant.

The Community Outreach will consist of four outreach workers (one of which is a supervisor) and one Community Peace Officer. This team will be responsible for addressing matters concerning unsheltered, encampments, social disorder, and ultimately connecting those

unsheltered to the proper resources in Spruce Grove or other jurisdictions as needs and resources necessitate. The team will also be active in providing timely responses to the community, businesses, and partner inquiries and ultimately enhancing community education, awareness, and coordination.

Council has deliberated over the various models that could be implemented in Spruce Grove to address this growing community need and has directed Administration to develop a permanent supportive housing facility model versus temporary shelters or transitional housing to align to Permanent Supportive Housing principles and thus, enable the resources to be built into the facility to enhance success for the neighbouring community. This model is not a drop-in or emergency housing facility and is operating with great success in many other communities.

Choosing the supportive housing model, rather than a shelter model, is based on several factors, notwithstanding and of significance, the specific needs of the local residents in need. Currently, there are 35 - 50 unsheltered individuals who have a direct relationship and history with Spruce Grove. Although not every one of these individuals will be suitable or successful in the Supportive Housing model, it would address the needs of most of the residents currently unsheltered. Intentional work through the 'outreach' team will be focused on accessing other required supports that do not exist in Spruce Grove (e.g., treatment, emergency shelter, transitional housing) rather than building or duplicating services offered elsewhere. It is important that a longer-term solution is the outcome to avoid increasing the number of unhoused, encampments, and transients among the unsheltered community.

Administration will continue to develop the Supportive Housing model that maximizes funding from all levels of Government and minimizes the burden on the local government and community. It will be critical that an appropriate site is determined that balances the needs of the local community and the principles of the supportive housing model to ensure success for all.

Extensive work continues to address opportunities for both capital and operating funding and as well, an expression of interest will be launched to determine what non-profit organizations may be interested in the provision of the services in Spruce Grove.

OPTIONS / ALTERNATIVES:

No alternatives are being proposed at this time by Administration.

CONSULTATION / ENGAGEMENT:

Community conversations are ongoing with community partners, non-profit organizations, and volunteers and will continue to occur as we transition to the Community Outreach model. Furthermore, discussions are occurring frequently with a variety of municipalities and service providers to better inform the operating model.

IMPLEMENTATION / COMMUNICATION:

It will be essential that as further work is determined, public awareness and engagement are undertaken to build support and education. A good neighbour policy is a mandated element of any service provider in the delivery of supportive housing.

IMPACTS:

It is believed that the Community Outreach team will have a direct and positive impact on the unsheltered community residents in terms of follow through and relationships and will result in a decrease over time in calls to enforcement and police. This impact has been noted in several communities where similar outreach teams have been launched.

The Supportive Housing model rather than a shelter will also have favorable impacts including avoiding the reality that once you have a shelter, it is believed you will always have a shelter and in fact, attract more from outside communities.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

At the May 23, 2023, Council meeting, Council approved the City's own revenue source of \$177,000 per year, for three years for the Community Outreach Program, ending March 31, 2026 to coincide with Building Safer Communities Fund (BSCF), Public Safety Canada funding of \$767,093. Collectively these two funding sources are anticipated to address the Community Outreach program from commencement to March 31, 2026.