

Report to Council



Date: September 28, 2020

To: Council

From: City Manager

Subject: Emergency Shelter Design Lab Update

Department: Active Living & Culture and Real Estate Services

Recommendation:

THAT Council receives, for information, the report from Active Living and Culture and Real Estate Services dated September 28, 2020, with respect to an update on the outcomes from the Emergency Shelter Design Lab.

Purpose:

To advise Council of the work in progress related to building on the outcomes from the Emergency Shelter Design Lab, including upcoming engagement of stakeholders to discuss creating a framework for an overarching Community Emergency Shelter Plan.

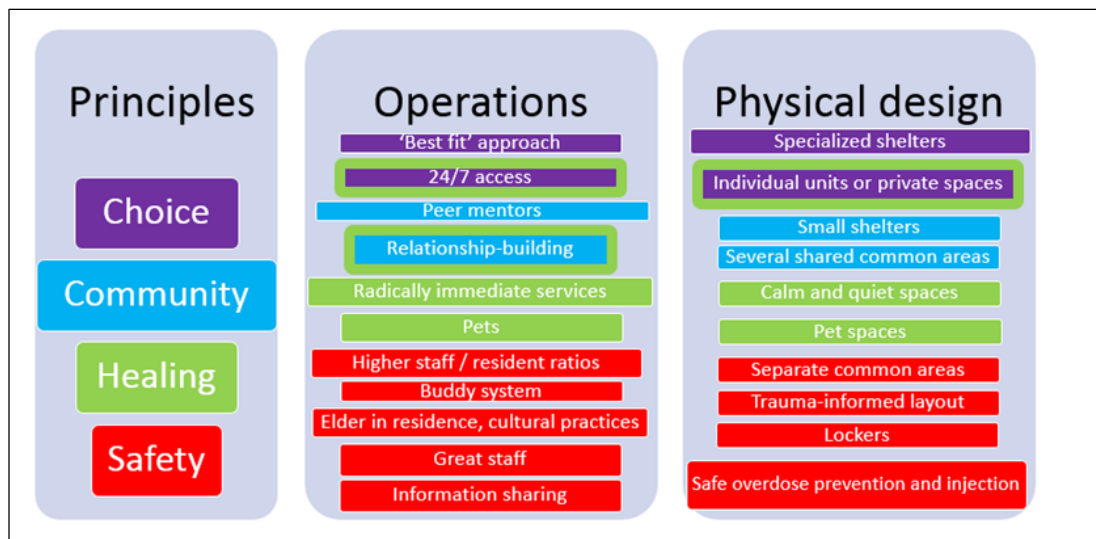
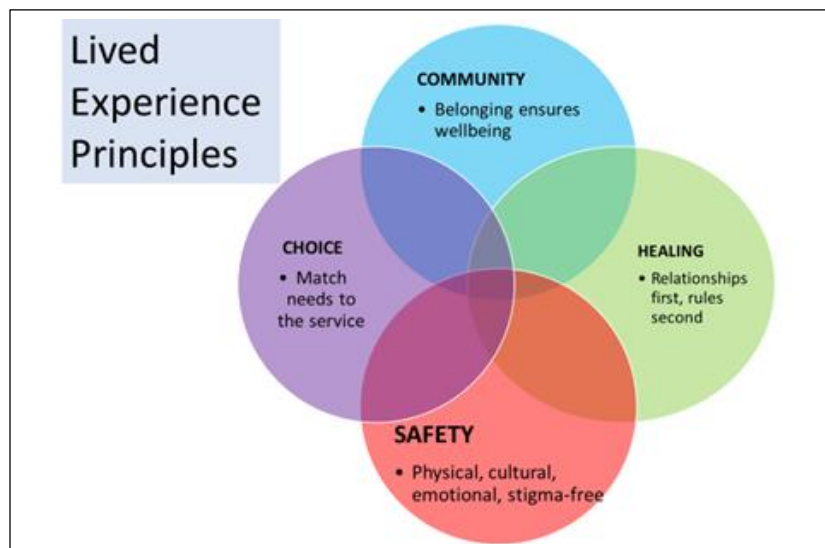
Background:

As Kelowna, like other communities in BC, continues to experience a homelessness crisis, which is being complicated by the current COVID-19 and overdose crises, initiating discussions regarding the development of a system-wide shelter plan to guide the future delivery of emergency shelter services in our community is of paramount importance. At this time, all levels of senior governments' attention are directed at solving homelessness with significant investments being made. While the focus is on housing people, just as critical in the systems approach led by the Central Okanagan Journey Home Society (COJHS) to address homelessness is the need to ensure that local shelter system is functioning within a coordinated and collaborative model that is housing focused and couched in Housing First principles and best practices.

Over the past year work has progressed on building a process to support the decisions related to the design, operation, and location of emergency shelters in our community. The *Emergency Shelter Design Lab* outcomes have been instrumental in informing work related to shelter location criteria, and the work on the complex needs advocacy paper to highlight the need to build the capacity of the shelter system to support individuals with complex needs. COJHS will be leading the process to engage stakeholders in a discussion related to combining the learnings from these three components of the work to form a framework to support the development of a comprehensive *Community Emergency Shelter Plan*.

Emergency Shelter Design Lab

The community conversation generated at the *Emergency Shelter Design Lab* has been transformational for the work related to implementing the Journey Home Strategy. Foundational to the discussion was the information gathered by the *Lived Experience Circle on Homelessness* (LECoH) hosting focus groups and conversations with people experiencing homeless prior to the Design Lab. Their voices were instrumental in setting the context for the community discussion regarding the future delivery of shelter services in our community. With representation from across multiple sectors (Lived and Living Experience voices, service providers, business organizations and local businesses, government agency representatives, and local community members) the discussions were guided by the four principles LECoH extrapolated from their consultation process: Choice, Community, Safety, and Healing. These principles, viewed in concert with best practices for shelters from across the nation, provided a new and innovative framework to guide the discussion related to the possibilities of creating a new future for the delivery of shelter services in Kelowna.



The recommendations emerging from the Design Lab are focused on building on the strengths of the current shelter system and focusing on areas for improvement to inform the development of a future program operation model, along with guidance for the physical design of shelters. Guided by the principles that emerged from the Lived and Living Experience consultation conducted by LECOH, the recommendations generally focus on applying a systems approach embedded in best practices, to the design and implementation of a future shelter model for Kelowna. The recommendations highlight the critical role of the emergency shelter system within Journey Home's system mapping approach to reach functional zero as a community to address homelessness.

Through the process of identifying the shelter system's strengths and areas of improvement, the learnings from the Lived Experience lens, along with the learnings garnered from a presentation of one of Canada's leading experts on shelter transformation to Housing First Shelter Program delivery, a consensus emerged from the table-based conversations regarding an optimal blueprint for a Kelowna-grown shelter delivery model based upon a systems-wide approach. Three primary themes were endorsed by *Emergency Shelter Design Lab* participants including:

1. Firstly, the Lived Experience principles of choice, connection, healing and safety were repeatedly referred to as overarching values.
2. Secondly, it became apparent that in the process of reflecting upon the form and function of shelters in Kelowna, there was a widely supported desire to abandon the term 'shelter', along with the baggage and stigma associated with it. In its place, the concept of moving towards a 'Navigation Site' emerged. This shift aligned well with the participants' wishes to develop a more choice-centred, housing-focused approach.
3. Thirdly, a clear consensus surfaced around the need for shelters to be operated as one coordinated shelter system through smaller, dispersed shelters, accommodating a range of populations and needs.

These three themes have informed the development of several detailed recommendations focused on program operation and physical design of shelters that will be presented to the local stakeholder's group in the next several weeks. These detailed recommendations, along with the Shelter Design Lab Criteria and Complex Needs projects have contributed to the concept of introducing the concept of a framework to form a *Community Emergency Shelter Plan* which will be discussed with stakeholders in the near future. The framework is outlined later in this report.

Emergency Shelter Location Criteria

The *Emergency Shelter Design Lab* outcomes indicated that there was a gap in providing community direction related to the location of shelters within the community. Although this was not the focus of the Shelter Design Lab, the discussions highlighted the need to provide guidance for community decision making related to emergency shelter location(s). Couched in the overall learnings from the Shelter Design Lab, staff engaged with Journey Home and Urban Matters ("Project Team") in discussions regarding developing a criteria framework to guide the decisions related to the future location of shelters. This discussion is unfolding as a component contributing to the formation of an overarching framework to contribute to the development of a *Community Emergency Shelter Plan*.

The Project Team is developing this document to highlight the multiple dimensions influencing emergency shelter creation and emphasizes that, in addition to, the voices of those accessing shelters, dimensions of program criteria, policy, community engagement, and location need to complement the decision-making criteria. There is no one size fits all criteria and it requires the consideration of context and input from a variety of sources.

The purpose of this report is to form a framework to capture, identify and define the multiple dimensions and dynamic complexities of shelter criteria that will help guide the process, influence and contribute to emergency shelter creation and location within our community:

- Equity and Inclusion lens
- Operational design and program models
- Policy – land use requirements
- Supports and services access
- Community Engagement

This framework includes highlighting the smart practices that justify location selection criteria with the intent of supporting ongoing housing and homelessness decision-making within the City of Kelowna. It is important to note that smart practices have been selected over best practices because smart practices consider the complexity of contexts outlining a series of potential factors that influence the 'smart' nature of a practice.

Currently, the Project Team is completing the draft document for the Emergency Shelter Location Criteria recommendations. Stakeholders associated with the past *Emergency Shelter Design Lab* will be provided opportunity to engage with the Project Team and provide comment on the draft recommendations. Upon completion of the engagement component of the works, staff will return to Council for discussion and endorsement of the Emergency Shelter Location Criteria.

Complex Needs Advocacy

Conversations at the *Emergency Shelter Design Lab* exposed the challenges experienced by the current Emergency Shelter system in addressing the needs of clients with complex health needs. Improvement areas highlighted included building the capacity of the local shelter system to accommodate people with complex needs, as well as a series of recommendations related to the physical design and operational model of current local shelters. These outcomes align with the current work being done on the Complex Needs Advocacy paper, which is also a key component in informing the stakeholder engagement process regarding the framework to develop a Community Emergency Shelter Plan.

The City of Kelowna is developing an evidence-based Advocacy Paper for our most vulnerable citizens. The paper will guide how municipalities in our region, intergovernmental partners, service providers and stakeholders (through a provincially supported regional approach) invest in infrastructure, housing and resources to meet the complex housing and health support needs of our region's most housing vulnerable.

The City of Kelowna will use the Advocacy Paper to work with our provincial leaders on the facilitating the conversation around the allocation of housing and supports, particularly the implementation of both a provincially funded Navigation Centre and Housing First model, within the region. These housing model focuses around providing the housing, wrap-around services and resources needed to house and support those whom are hardest to house.

Community Emergency Shelter Plan (framework for consultation)

The recommendations from the *Emergency Shelter Design Lab*, combined with the work on the Shelter Criteria and Complex Needs Advocacy projects, have contributed to the concept of developing a framework that will support the work to create an overarching Community Emergency Shelter Plan. The concept will be presented for feedback, co-led by COJHS and City staff, to a group of stakeholders that were instrumental in the planning of the *Emergency Shelter Design Lab* including: representatives from LECOH, local shelter, housing, and outreach services operators, Interior Health, and BC Housing. Council will be kept informed regarding this process. If stakeholders embrace the framework and support the formation of a community plan for emergency shelters, the final plan will be presented to Council for endorsement, as well as to inform Council's future advocacy efforts.

The draft framework that will be shared for discussion with stakeholders includes a series of emergency shelter operational recommendations based on the following themes emerging from the Emergency Shelter Design Lab to be shared with the local stakeholder group:

- System wide approach for delivery of emergency shelters, based on a person-centred housing-focused approach providing the opportunity for choice and individualized care that can adjust and change based on a person's unique needs and circumstances.
- Adoption of a model based on best practice with a range of health and wellness services available throughout the shelter system.
- Adoption of a model to support shelter coordination, collaboration, and program and operation standards to ensure continuity of care across the shelter system.
- Lived Experience principles (choice, connection, safety, and healing) incorporated into all planning and design of operations and physical design and lived experience leadership embedded in the shelter system.
- Equity and inclusion plan to encompass operation standards, physical design, and staff training.

Subject to stakeholders embracing this approach, COJHS and City staff will support the development of an overarching community plan to address the future delivery of shelter services in our community. Should a comprehensive plan emerge from this process, it will be presented to Council for endorsement and future advocacy to senior government.

Next Steps:

Over the course of the next several months the following steps will be implemented:

Estimated Timeline	Activity
Quarter 4, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A consultation series with local stakeholders related to the Emergency Shelter Design Lab outcomes, the proposed Emergency Shelter Location Criteria, and the framework to support the concept of developing a Community Emergency Shelter Plan. Depending upon the outcomes of the consultation process, further planning on the process to develop a plan will unfold
Quarter 4, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Presentation of final Emergency Shelter Design Lab recommendations for Council information• Update to Council on the outcomes of discussions with stakeholders related to the concept of development of a Community Emergency Shelter Plan
Quarter 4, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Complex Needs Engagement Plan (Phase 1) - Ground Softening to educate and informing local government and service providers on the Advocacy Work
Quarter 1, 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Finalization of Emergency Shelter Criteria framework and presentation to Council for consideration and endorsement
Quarter 1-3, 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Complex Needs Engagement Plan (Phase 2) – Public Engagement• Feasibility phase for Complex Needs Project• Completion on development of Completion Advocacy Paper.

Conclusion:

The *Emergency Shelter Design Lab* hosted in 2019 laid the foundation for the concept of working towards the development of a Community Emergency Shelter Plan. The framework for the concept of developing a plan has been informed by, and incorporates the learnings and outcomes related to the Emergency Shelter Design Lab, the Shelter Criteria project, and the Complex Needs Advocacy Paper. The outcomes of the stakeholder engagement regarding the concept of developing a community plan for shelters will be shared with Council once consultation is complete.

As has been demonstrated through the development of the Journey Home Strategy, Kelowna would continue to be well-positioned for senior government investment should the development of a Community Emergency Shelter Plan proceed. It is anticipated that the formation of such a plan would provide Council with a solid basis for advocacy to senior government to ensure that the Homeless Serving Sectors continuum of care is complete with a resilient, effective, and adaptable emergency shelter

system that contributes to ensuring that the experience of homelessness is rare, brief when it does occur, and doesn't reoccur.

Internal Circulation:

Active Living & Culture
Policy & Planning
Communications
Community Safety

Existing Policy:

The development of a Community Emergency Shelter Plan is aligned with a number of Council and Corporate Priorities, as support by Council through the City's Imagine Kelowna: Vision into Action. A Summary of these is provided below:

Proposed Advocacy Paper – Alignment with Council Priorities	
<u>Council Priorities</u>	Details
Community Safety	Crime rates are decreasing Residents feel safe Data and analysis are used to understand problems + target responses
Social and Inclusive	Homelessness is decreasing Inclusivity and diversity are increasing Policy guides where the City invests resources
<u>Corporate Priorities</u>	
People	Collaboration is improving problem solving

Considerations not applicable to this report:

Legal/Statutory Authority:

Legal/Statutory Procedural Requirements:

External Agency/Public Comments:

Communications Comments:

Submitted by: S. Wheeler, Social Development Manager
B. Walker, Property Officer Specialist

Approved for inclusion: J. Gabriel, Divisional Director, Active Living & Culture
J. Säufferer, Department Manager, Real Estate

Attachment: 1. Schedule A – Presentation

cc: D. Noble-Brandt, Policy & Planning Department Manager
K. Kay, Communications Consultant
D. Caul, Community Safety Director
S. Leatherdale, Divisional Director, Corporate and Protective Services