

Report to Council



Date: July 12, 2021
To: Council
From: City Manager
Subject: Complex Needs Advocacy Paper
Department: Real Estate

Recommendation:

THAT Council receives, for information, the report from the Real Estate department dated July 12, 2021, with respect to the Complex Needs Advocacy Paper;

AND THAT Council endorse the Complex Needs Advocacy Paper as attached to the report from the Real Estate department dated July 12, 2021;

AND FURTHER THAT Council authorize the Mayor to collaborate with the Mayors of the City of Vernon, City of West Kelowna and District of Lake Country and the Chief of the Okanagan Indian Band to present the Advocacy Paper to senior levels of government, seeking the development of a new model of complex care housing with supports, a system redesign and the funding and resources necessary to address the housing and support needs of individuals with complex needs.

Purpose:

To seek Council endorsement of the finalized Complex Needs Advocacy Paper.

Background:

Our community requires a full continuum of care related to housing and health supports to address the needs of individuals with complex needs¹ – from emergency shelters, to supportive housing – alongside

¹ Complex needs are the attributes of *Individuals experiencing overlapping mental and substance use disorders, co-morbid developmental disabilities, acquired brain injuries or FASD often resulting in the experience of homelessness, along with being frequent users of crisis and emergency services. For the purposes of this advocacy paper, the focus is on individuals experiencing overlapping mental health and substance use disorders who experience homelessness.*

a range of health supports that include primary care, and care for mental health and substance use. Individuals with complex needs have an impact on the well-being of our community, both in terms of how they are supported in our community and how this directly impacts our community's ability to provide housing and supports to individuals without complex needs. The City continues to invest in developing an advocacy framework toward effectively and holistically addressing this system gap in our community. To this end, Council funded the development of a Complex Needs Advocacy Paper uniquely tailored to our community and building on the recommendations of the Central Okanagan Journey Home Society (COJHS) to propose a redesign of the continuum of care with a particular focus on the gap in housing with supports.

The challenge of addressing the infrastructure and resource needs for individuals facing complex needs is a significant concern for Kelowna, our region and the province. By addressing the lack of appropriately designed housing with supports through a regional lens, the advocacy paper appropriately positions, and scales proposed solutions at hand to the Okanagan Valley as a whole. Accordingly, stakeholders in this initiative include Interior Health, BC Housing, City of Vernon, City of West Kelowna, District of Lake Country and Okanagan Indian Band (see schedule A – Executive Summary).

Scale of the Need

The project team expended significant efforts to assess the scope of the local population that presents as experiencing complex needs. The data for our region suggests approximately 250 of the approximately 520 individuals facing homelessness have complex needs (see schedule A – 2.3 Local Population Characteristics). This population can be further disaggregated as being 60% male and 34% indigenous.

Costs of Status Quo

Beyond the human cost of homelessness, the economic cost of not providing appropriate housing with supports for individuals experiencing complex needs for the social, health care and justice systems is significant. Research suggests that the annual costs of not addressing the systems gaps and remaining in a reactionary response are between **\$54,000-75,000²** per individual per year. Accordingly, it is estimated that the direct economic cost of the current 'status quo' pertaining to the approximately 250 individuals with complex needs in our community is between **\$14M and \$18M annually**.

Alternatively, it is estimated that the annual cost associated with a redesign of the housing systems to support individuals with complex needs that incorporates onsite health supports alongside complementary community-based health services is estimated at **\$38,000** per individual per year (see schedule A – 4.1 Cost of Improvements). This suggests potential system-wide savings in the range of **\$4.5 to \$8.5M annually³**. It should be noted that while these anticipated savings illustrate the business case benefits of investing in additional supports for individuals experiencing complex needs, they do not translate into direct budget reductions for emergency services, policing or crisis intervention services. These types of direct reductions are likely to be captured only once comprehensive, upstream prevention has taken place to address the root causes of homelessness, mental health or substance use challenges.

² [Housing-first strategy proves cost effective especially for the most-vulnerable homeless group - McGill University](#)

³ *To better understand the health care costs of "status quo" vs. a new integrate care / systems approach, the City of Kelowna is looking to partner with research teams (potentially UBCO Research Consortium)*

Systems Gaps

While our community continues to deliver a number of affordable and supportive housing initiatives, the delivery of housing with directly incorporated health supports that meet the needs of individuals experiencing complex needs continues to be a 'gap' in the regional continuum of care. Resources and programs provided by appropriately qualified personnel are needed all along the continuum of assessment, triage, and housing to support individuals to access and maintain their housing. There is not a housing model that is designed specifically for people experiencing complex needs⁴ as the region does not currently have the inventory of effective facilities and related program supports and personnel needed for these individuals. Further, the system redesign should be grounded in housing first principles that the COJHS has been instrumental in promoting and supporting in the community. Housing First is where housing is provided to those experiencing homelessness and is then used as a foundation for additional services and supports. In addition, the principles of choice, healing, connection and safety promoted by individuals with lived/living experience should provide the basis for designing spaces to support complex care housing for those experiencing complex needs.

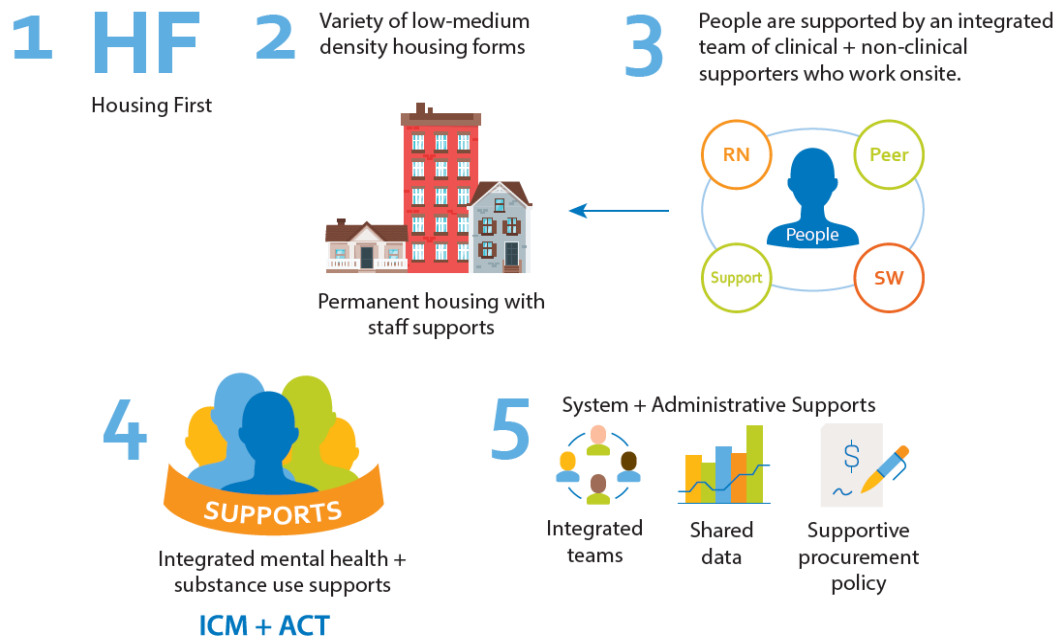
There is also a lack of qualified staff locally with specific training to support individuals with complex needs. Currently, the system of housing delivery dictates high client to staff ratios in existing shelter and housing contexts, such that those who are qualified often do not have the resources or bandwidth to adequately support these individuals. People with complex needs require a high level of attention from staff, which makes it difficult for social services organizations (and housing providers, in particular) to allow them to stay when organizational capacity is low.

Furthermore, systemic racism and inter-generational trauma are contributing factors to the over-representation of Indigenous people who experience complex needs. There is a need to ensure that all services incorporate Indigenous cultural safety and Indigenous focused supports. Given the over-representation of Indigenous people who experience complex needs, solutions need to incorporate Indigenous leadership, cultural safety and belonging.

Best Practices Moving Forward

There are very real differences from one community to the next. The jurisdictional responsibilities health authorities have to housing agencies, municipalities and First Nations vary on a case by case basis, but there nevertheless exists a series of foundational tenets around which a successful model of support for individuals with complex needs can be based. The following figure illustrates the five components that meet the demographic profile of our community to help support those individuals experiencing homelessness with the most complex needs (See Schedule A – 30. Supportive Practices).

⁴ It is worth noting that, Ellis Place (opened as of November 2020) aims to provide greater supports for this population.



Aligning with Provincial Government Priorities & Mandates

As shown in the attached Schedule A - 5.0 Advocacy Position, five government Ministries have relevant jurisdiction and influence over supporting individuals experiencing homelessness with complex needs to attain and maintain stable housing with appropriate supports. Accordingly, developing an effective advocacy strategy requires a strong understanding of each Ministry’s mandate and resources, complemented by a targeted engagement strategy.

The leadership role the City of Kelowna has taken around the development of the advocacy paper has been instrumental in shaping the conversation at the Provincial level and informing the BC Urban Mayors Caucus (BCUMC) in how best to address the housing with supports system redesign, including the infrastructure and resource needs for individuals experiencing complex needs. Part in parcel to the work taking place, the BCUMC is pressing the Province to initiate a number of complex care housing pilot projects to be up and operating within a year as needed to accelerate B.C.’s response to addressing the mental health, substance use and homelessness crises.

Next Steps:

Over the course of the next few months, the framework around the Complex Needs Advocacy Paper will be finalized as per the timeline below.

Estimated Timeline	Activity
July 12	City of Kelowna Council Endorsement of Advocacy Paper
Q3+Q4	Council and Senior Leadership advocacy position with province

Conclusion:

The work the City of Kelowna, the Project Consultants, Project Stakeholders and the Intergovernmental and Municipal Partners have completed to date to effectively and holistically address complex care housing and supports highlights the importance of a systems redesign to addressing the challenge. This systems approach requires the full support, financial resources and leadership of the previously noted provincial ministries in order to achieve the level of integration of services required to support the development and implementation of this new model. The framework set forth in the Advocacy Paper will guide the provincial lead agencies as they invest into infrastructure and resources to address the system gaps along the continuum of care that effect individuals that require significant housing and health supports. The advocacy paper provides an opportunity to not only address complex needs, but to build on the learnings as the recommendations move forward in a manner that will inform the necessary province-wide, long-term strategy needed to create appropriate housing and supports in communities across the province.

Internal Circulation:

Active Living & Culture
Policy & Planning
Real Estate Services
Communications
Community Safety

Existing Policy:

The development of a Complex Needs advocacy paper is aligned with a number of Council and Corporate Priorities, as supported by Council through the City's Imagine Kelowna: Vision into Action plan. This includes Community Safety (crime rates are decreasing; residents feel safe & data are used to understand problems) and Social and Inclusive (homelessness is decreasing).

This advocacy paper is in alignment with other City of Kelowna housing goals expressed in documents including the Housing Needs Assessment and the Journey Home Strategy.

City of Kelowna Housing Needs Assessment:

- **GAP 6: Bottleneck in the Wheelhouse.** Trends in market rental and ownership housing put pressure on the long-term supportive and subsidized rental housing areas of the Wheelhouse. Journey Home Strategy Recommendation: Explore the development of innovative partnerships, laying the foundation for strategic multi-sectoral collective planning and investments.
- **GAP 7: Need for greater housing diversity.** Encouraging a variety of unit sizes will ensure that suitable housing is available for all ages, abilities and household types. Journey Home Strategy Recommendation: Identify community priorities and investigate opportunities to provide appropriate, permanent housing for key populations.

Journey Home:

- **Guiding Principles – Housing First.** Housing First is a person-centered approach rooted in the belief that all people deserve housing, and that anyone, even those with the most complex needs, can move directly from homelessness to housing in concert with appropriate supports.
- **Pillar 3: Housing & Supports.** The Journey Home Strategy indicates that housing strategies must reflect the needs of various sub-populations including a continuum of housing options.

Critical to this success is including integration between homeless services, mental health, and addictions by adopting a harm reduction approach across the sector, including training the service system on related concepts such as trauma-informed, motivational interviewing, and the philosophy for Housing First

Considerations not applicable to this report:

Legal/Statutory Authority:

Legal/Statutory Procedural Requirements:

Financial/Budgetary Considerations:

External Agency/Public Comments:

Communications Comments:

Submitted by: S. Wheeler, Social Development Manager
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Approved for inclusion: J. Säufferer, Department Manager, Real Estate

Attachment: 1. Schedule A – Complex Needs Advocacy Paper
2. Schedule B – Presentation

cc: D. Noble-Brandt, Policy & Planning Department Manager
S. Wheeler, Social Development Manager
D. Caul, Community Safety Director
C. Matte, Community Communications Manager