

Report to Council



Date: June 24, 2024
To: Council
From: City Manager
Subject: Social Development – Update
Department: Social Development

Recommendation:

THAT Council receives, for information, the report from the Social Development Department dated June 24, 2024, with respect to the new service delivery model.

Purpose:

To present Council with an update of the objectives, key milestones and future work of the Social Development Department.

Council Priority Alignment:

Homelessness

Background:

In December 2023, through the annual City budget approval process, Council endorsed a new Social Development service delivery model. As a new City service, Social Development will drive change and collective, community action to enhance social wellness and improve responsiveness to various complex community challenges.

The 2024 budget included approval to hire five additional full-time equivalents (FTEs) for the Department. This significant investment signaled a dedication to purposeful and strategic advancement of work already in progress while increasing the City’s capacity to mobilize solutions-focused approaches to complex social issues.

Discussion:

The new Social Development Department builds on the strong foundations of community collaboration and learning, including years of sustained action related to supporting vulnerable populations (e.g., unhoused/precariously housed). The development of the model has, and continues to be, informed by existing plans and strategies, including the City’s Healthy Housing and homelessness strategies as well

as Provincial and Federal mandates, the voices of people with lived and living experience, feedback from the social serving sector, as well as Council and Corporate priorities.

Through investment in this model, we can expect renewed and increased energies committed to translating existing recommendations into actions. The long-term outcome will be for our community to drive change through social development to achieve sustainable equity and belonging. With this, our key and aspirational objectives include:

1. Homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring
2. Focus will shift from incident response to prevention
3. Kelowna will have greater housing choice
4. New funding streams and advocacy needs will be identified
5. Our community will have a greater understanding of community needs and investments in social wellness

Since fall 2023, in alignment with these 5 objectives, several supporting actions have been completed or advanced through the collaborative efforts of various departments across the City of Kelowna. The highlights of which are as follows:

1. Homelessness is rare, brief and non-recurring:

- Signed MOU with the Province for HEARTH & HEART, resulting in the introduction of 120 new rapid safety net housing units, with the opening of STEP Place and Trailside.
- Enhanced collaboration with BC Housing (HEART) through the Coordinated Outreach Circle and Shelter Coordinated Access and Assessment Table to connect individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness with available shelter and housing (Bylaw Services lead).

2. Prevention and Upstream:

- Through the budget 2024 approval process, Social Development secured a full-time Social Development Coordinator responsible for upstream initiatives to support youth and other vulnerable populations and address new areas of social wellness. Specifically, the Coordinator is already engaged in advancing work related to food security, equitable access to transportation, and actions within [Kelowna's Community Safety Plan](#).

3. Greater Housing Choice:

- In alignment with the City's [Housing Needs Assessment](#) and [Healthy Housing Strategy](#) which identifies subsidized rental housing as a key element of the housing wheelhouse and encourages reducing the cost of affordable, purpose-built rental housing, Council approved a one-time enhancement of the Rental Housing Grants Program.
- Social Development and Policy & Planning are co-creating the City's Housing Action Plan (HAP) for meaningful and actionable housing initiatives. HAP will cover all aspects of the housing [Wheelhouse](#), including the safety net, housing with supports, and market housing components.

4. New Funding and Advocacy Opportunities:

- Kelowna has been identified by the Province to receive one of 13 new, purpose-built Complex Care Housing facilities being introduced around the province. The City-contributed site will include 20 newly constructed complex care housing units and 20 supportive housing units. This builds on the new 20 operational complex care beds that opened in Kelowna in 2023.

- Social Development received Federal [Reaching Home](#) funds to work with shelter, housing and social service providers to implement the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS). HIFIS allows for multiple service providers to input and access 'real-time' homelessness data and refer clients to the services they need at the right time.
- KGH Foundation has committed funding to support a joint project with City of West Kelowna to address current capacity constraints among the social serving sector as it relates to business continuity planning and disaster preparedness.

5. Our community will have a greater understanding of community needs:

- Through the additional resourcing to Social Development, staff are now able to implement robust communications strategies to meet ongoing community information and engagement needs in a proactive manner, primarily around new project announcements. This will deepen in the coming months to focus on other aspects of the City's work on social wellbeing initiatives.
- Staff are focused on online content development, targeted information campaigns to residents, and in-person media and community engagement (e.g., STEP Place and Trailside community engagement).
- Staff are supporting ongoing collaboration efforts with regional partners and social serving sector (e.g., Pacific Avenue Complex Care site).

Next Steps:

Develop the Department

- Complete remaining hiring to bring the Social Development team to full complement.
- Refine actions to ensure alignment with Council and Corporate priorities, as well as the Department's desired outcomes.
- Develop indicators that will measure the implementation and effectiveness of various initiatives.

Advance Actions

- Complete the delivery of rapid safety net housing units committed to by the Province.
- Complete the development of the Housing Action Plan.
- Complete disaster response planning related to unhoused and precariously housed populations in partnership with United Way BC, KGH Foundation and City of West Kelowna.
- Advocate for new care models to support varied needs of vulnerable populations.
- Support the creation of a new purpose-built permanent shelter with 'wrap around' supports and graduated housing options.
- Support and expand family support services to promote and strengthen healthy lifestyles (Community Safety Plan Action 2.2).
- Build trust and public confidence in the work that is needed, through community relations with invested groups and social wellbeing partners and ongoing proactive communications to our residents.

Ongoing Considerations

- Collaborate with BC Housing, Reaching Home and local shelter providers to implement a standardized data information management system, 'HIFIS'.
- Collaborate with Policy & Planning in the investigation of options to protect renters impacted by redevelopment projects.

- Advance social development actions identified in the Recommendations of the Mayor's Task Force on Crime Reduction.
- Explore opportunities to address hygiene needs.

Conclusion:

The City's new Social Development service delivery model builds on several years of sustained action related to collaborative community development. As the work transitions from administrative development (i.e., staffing to full complement), our focus will shift to actioning outstanding elements of existing plans, strategies and other initiatives. In alignment with our long-term vision and key objectives, the expanded department is poised to propel action and develop future social policies, strategies, action plans and services to increase social equity in Kelowna.

Internal Circulation:

Communications
Policy & Planning
Corporate & Protective Services
Partnerships & Investments

Considerations not applicable to this report:

Legal/Statutory Authority:

Legal/Statutory Procedural Requirements:

Existing Policy:

Financial/Budgetary Considerations:

Consultation and Engagement:

Submitted by:

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