

## **Appendix E**

### *BURNSIDE GORGE COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION PROPOSALS FOR THE CITY OF VICTORIA'S APPLICATION TO THE STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES' SERVICES PROGRAM*

The Burnside Gorge Community Association (BGCA) requests the following proposals be included in the City of Victoria's application for funding under the Strengthening Communities' Services (SCS) program. These proposals respond to the eligible activities described in the "reduced community concerns about public health and safety in neighbourhoods where unsheltered homes populations are seeking temporary shelter" section of the SCS Program and Application Guide.

## **Rationale**

Burnside Gorge has a disproportionate share of temporary and permanent supportive housing for people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness:

- Burnside Gorge has 57% of all supportive housing/shelter units in the Capital region, not including Paul's Motor Inn and the Arena which are sitting on the boundary of Burnside Gorge
- Supportive / shelter units – 425
- Temporary units in hotels – 407

The decision by BC Housing to use 4 hotels in the community as temporary supportive housing has exacerbated an already challenging problem of conflict between community members and residents of supportive housing.

In addition, the concentration of supportive housing in Burnside Gorge has attracted people from outside the neighbourhood to prey on homeless people – thieves, drug dealers, etc. – which increases the negative impact on the neighbourhood.

While many permanent residents in Burnside Gorge are frustrated, angry and frightened by the disorder this housing has brought to the neighbourhood, many residents are concerned about the homeless and wish to see them housed and able to access appropriate health and social services.

The BGCA believes that most people want to live in a safe and healthy neighbourhood and is working to support all residents, including those in supportive housing, to work together to reach this goal.

## **4 Proposed Projects**

### (1) A Pilot Project to Improve Community Engagement

The Coalition to End Homelessness identifies the importance of community integration in their "Housing First Model":

Housing First provides people with immediate access to permanent housing with no housing 'readiness' or compliance requirements, is recovery-oriented and centres on consumer choice, self-determination and community integration.

Unfortunately, there has been very little to no work done on community integration and inclusion with the residents, businesses and residents of supportive housing/shelters.

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The BGCA proposes to establish a facilitated working group consisting of residents of supportive housing/shelters, other neighbourhood residents and neighbourhood business owners to:

- Build relationships through dialogue between all groups,
- Develop mutual care and understanding of what a safe and healthy community is and how all residents can contribute to that,
- Develop and implement strategies to improve health and safety in the neighborhood for all residents and business owners,
- Develop new ways of communicating respectfully so the concerns of all who live in Burnside Gorge are taken into consideration,
- Reduce polarization, tension and division within the neighborhood,
- Develop community solutions to neighbourhood problems such as property crime, vandalism, open drug dealing and use, prostitution, etc.
- Work with local First Nations to ensure Indigenous culture and values are embedded in the engagement process, and
- Develop and strengthen inclusion and integration within the community so that all residents and business owners can say they feel a sense of inclusion, support and belonging within Burnside Gorge community.

This Burnside Gorge based initiative could be a pilot project for all neighbourhoods in the City of Victoria to demonstrate how to successfully facilitate respectful dialogue between residents of supportive housing and other neighbourhood residents. Opportunities to increase integration will be developed with the working group and with partners including, but not limited to, the City, the Coalition to End Homelessness, Island Health, local service providers and others.

Resources required:

- Full-time lead and facilitator to work with BGCA Engagement Committee
- Meeting space, food, and other typical supports for group meetings (post COVID)
- Improved access to technology for some members
- Estimated general budget: \$35,000 - \$50,000

#### (2) Improved Safety & Security

Incidents of theft, violence and disorderly behaviours in the neighbourhood, and increasing graffiti have increased residents' fear for their safety. Some parts of Burnside Gorge are poorly lit at night and are perceived as dangerous. Better street lighting and, in some cases, changes to public landscaping would improve the sense of safety in the community. Graffiti increases the perception of being an unsafe neighborhood and the response time from the City is slow.

The BGCA proposes to work with residents to identify sites where improved lighting and other security measures would have an immediate impact on residents' sense of security. Key locations would include: the Galloping Goose, the Manchester/Sumas triangle, the area surrounding Chown Place and a playground on Balfour Avenue.

In addition, we propose an increased and timely response program to graffiti in our neighborhood, collaborating with and complementing efforts by the City and Victoria Police Department.

Resources required:

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- Coordinator to lead graffiti removal program and work with residents and business to remove it on their property
- CEPTD (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) assessment
- Skills training for volunteers
- Cleaning materials and supplies
- Fixtures replacement, installation and repair
- Estimated general budget: \$12,000 - \$30,000

#### (3) Increased Bylaw Enforcement

Like some other neighbourhoods, Burnside Gorge lacks sufficient bylaw enforcement on weekends and evenings. This is required for addressing unauthorized encampments, graffiti, walkway obstructions, etc., during the peak times of day for such activities. Hiring additional bylaw officers will provide enhanced service throughout the city, and the city may wish to hire up to a dozen such officers. Given the preponderance of temporary and permanent supportive housing for people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness in Burnside Gorge, and the associated activities that take place in the public realm, four bylaw officers could be well employed in this neighbourhood.

Resources required:

- Additional bylaw officers (4)
- Discussions with Island Health to determine whether mental health outreach or social workers could pair up with bylaw officers on weekends and evenings to provide necessary support to homeless people
- Estimated general budget: Four (4) bylaw officers for one year, approximately \$290,000

#### (4) Clean & Safe Teams

Victoria's Clean & Safe teams are a model of community action to keep streets clean, employ people who might otherwise find employment hard to find and act as community ambassadors demonstrating the community cares about itself. While most of the service providers who manage the supportive housing sites in Burnside Gorge have Clean & Safe teams, they only cover the areas immediately adjacent to their buildings. A coordinated neighbourhood team would be more effective, more efficient and increase community pride.

The BGCA proposes to establish a Burnside Gorge Clean & Safe Team modelled on the DVBA teams, housed in the Burnside Gorge neighbourhood, in partnership with the community. We will seek a community partner to work with the BGCA (for example, the Victoria Native Friendship Centre) to establish the teams and develop a model that would encourage Burnside Gorge residents to consider joining/working with residents of supportive housing on the teams.

Resources required:

- Coordinator for the Clean & Safe Team
- Two additional crew members

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- Clothing (vests, protective gear) and equipment
- Training of Teams - instruction and materials, venue costs (instruction, equipment storage)
- Team member compensation
- Estimated general budget: \$60,950 (based on an estimated 25% of the DVBA program, scaled for neighbourhood size & number of workers)