



FAIRFIELD GONZALES
COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION
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Mayor and Council
City of Victoria
1 Centennial Square
Victoria, BC V8W 1P6

May 14, 2021

To: Mayor and Council, City of Victoria

Re: Critical Need for Housing Outreach Support Worker

Dear Mayor Helps and Councillors,

Fairfield Gonzales Community Association has found over the years that there is a gap in services in Victoria for seniors, individuals and couples who are losing housing. It has been a common occurrence that an apartment building in Fairfield Gonzales is sold, or a group of tenants are renovicted, and there is often nowhere for these people to turn for help in finding new housing. While we do what we can to help, we do not have the expertise or resources to make an impact. We expect a surge in this need to continue as the effects of the pandemic continue to be felt, particularly in lower income demographics.

There is an intense need to rally resources and one to one support to attempt to find short and long term housing options, before folks end up living outside or in vehicles. While trying to support folks in whatever way we can, our organizations have been overwhelmed by this issue and feel like we are fighting a losing battle. The extremely inaccessible housing market is particularly challenging for individuals competing for the most affordable rentals in the city, when they are often contending with challenges like low literacy, limited support, social isolation and moderate anxiety and depression.

We believe that a Housing Outreach worker, employed through Quadra Village Community Centre and connected to the other Community Centres/Neighbourhood Associations will help increase the skillsets of staff and volunteers in those organizations. As well, it will offer the opportunity to provide tailored one to support to folks who don't meet current emergency housing definitions but are in peril of losing access to shelter. We believe that Quadra Village Community Centre is well situated to provide this critical service at this critical moment and the annual cost of service at \$60,000 is a worthwhile investment.



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Thank you for your consideration and please see the key components below.



Vanya McDonnell
Co-Executive Director

t. [REDACTED] e. [REDACTED]

Housing Outreach Worker Overview

The Issues:

- Single adults and couples losing their housing with limited time, opportunity (affordable housing stock), resources.
- Limited affordable market housing stock, long waits for affordable housing and narrow definition of eligibility for emergency housing.
- People on the precipice of homelessness who lack the knowhow to navigate such a competitive housing market.
- Busy staff in Community Centres who have great relationships with folks in the community, but are busy with other mandates central to their roles.

The Solution:

- A QVCC practicum student gathers resources to help this new Housing Outreach Worker can hit the ground running.
- A housing outreach (worker, 1FTE) support pilot facilitated by QVCC with referrals from the other Community Centres and Neighbourhood Associations. It is basically trying to assist adults (single and couples) who are at risk of homelessness, couch surfing, newly homeless etc.
- Building and bridging the skills and confidence to get the process of finding housing started (and keep it going).
- Helping people navigate the housing system including locating low rent options and seeking long term solutions through waitlists.
- Raising awareness among Community Centre and Neighbourhood Association staff/volunteers in order to ensure that folks have easy access to information to provide housing access support at the neighbourhood level.



Re: Request for the City of Victoria to Support Housing Outreach

Attention: Mayor and Council

Date: May 14, 2021

Dear Mayor Helps and Councillors,

Over the past year, the North Park Neighbourhood Association has witnessed the impacts that homelessness has on personal and community wellbeing. We are eager to support the Quadra Village Community Centre's request for funding a one-time grant of \$60,000 for a Housing Outreach Pilot Project. This request addresses several important parts of a complex problem: it addresses the need to prevent homelessness before it occurs, it highlights the fact that the most successful interventions to secure long term housing options involve a one-on-one approach and an intense rallying of resources, and it acknowledges that existing programs do not apply to everyone (such as some single adults, couples without children, and some seniors). A housing outreach worker will do just this. This would be an incredibly valuable resource to North Park as well as many other neighbourhoods.

Victoria's housing market is particularly difficult for individuals competing for the most affordable rentals when they are contending with challenges such as low literacy, limited support, social isolation, stigma, and moderate anxiety and depression. North Park residents have the potential to benefit dramatically from a dedicated housing outreach worker. North Park has the highest unemployment rate in the city (8.1), 52% of residents live in core housing need, 30% of adults, and 51% of seniors are low income based on the low income measure, and 79% of residents are renters - many of whom living precariously in aging rental buildings.

We believe that the Quadra Village Community Centre has developed a great deal of experience in assisting individuals in these situations and is the right organization to provide this service. A housing outreach worker, employed through Quadra Village Community Centre and connected to the other Community Centres/Neighbourhood Associations will help increase the skillsets of staff and volunteers in those organizations. A housing outreach worker will offer the opportunity to provide individuals with the one-on-one support required to navigate individuals through current emergency housing programs, and support those individuals who do not qualify for existing programs - such as some single adults, couples without children, and some seniors. We believe that Quadra Village Community Centre is well situated to provide this critical service and the annual cost of service at \$60,000 is a worthwhile investment.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sarah Murray
Executive Director
North Park Neighbourhood Association

t. [REDACTED] e. [REDACTED]